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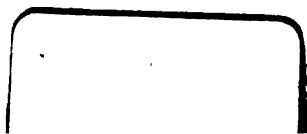
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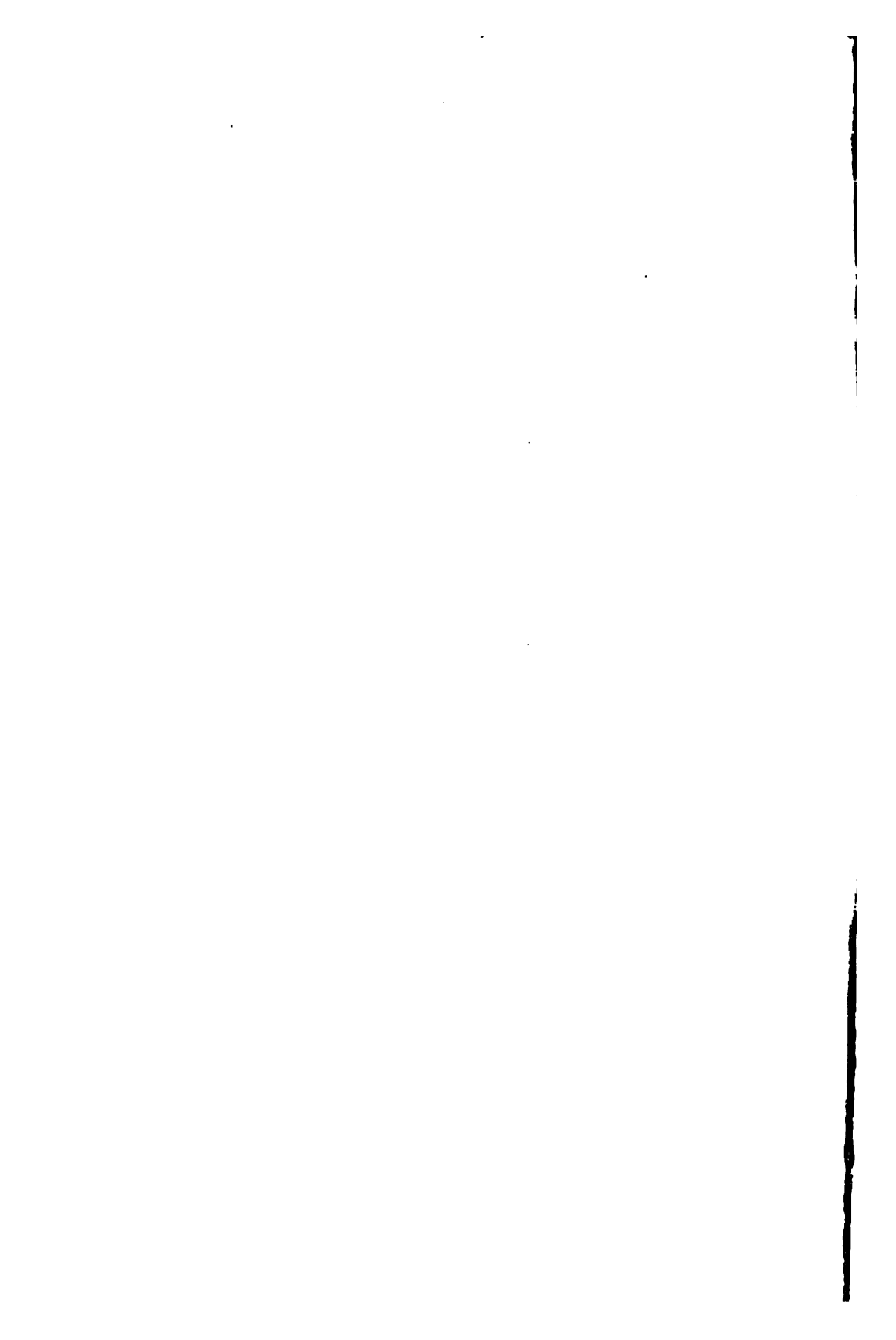
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# SHORT STORIES

A MAGAZINE OF SELECT FICTION

VOLUME XVI.

MAY-AUGUST, 1894

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THIS MAGAZINE IS PLANNED TO COVER THE  
STORY-TELLING FIELD OF THE WORLD, AND  
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CURABLE IN ALL THE VARIOUS LANGUAGES

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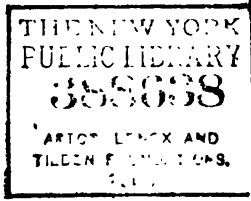
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NEW YORK

THE CURRENT LITERATURE PUBLISHING CO.

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XVI., No. 1

May, 1894

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# SHORT STORIES

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### THIS JACK AND THE OTHER \*

BY EDGAR FAWCETT



“COME in.” Griffith, as he spoke these words, reclined in a huge easy-chair, with a posture of great indolence, smoking a cigarette. His pretty studio, full of choice drapings, odd ornaments and unfinished sketches, looked, through one of its smaller windows, on the Academy of Design. Griffith loved that window. He used to say that if he could only get the right distance back from it, Fourth Avenue literally became for him the Grand Canal, while rattlings of carts and jinglings of street-cars mellowed into musical calls of gondoliers. He made some such observation now to his friend, Evan Mowbray, who had availed himself of the “Come in” to enter and stand staring at a very inchoate picture on an easel bathed in searching sunshine.

“Is this the tenth or eleventh time, Jack, that you’ve slandered the Palazzo San Marco? You know very well that it looks no more like the Academy of Design than Grace Church looks like Westminster Abbey. . . . Any news?”

“Yes,” yawned Griffith; “I’ve painted for two hours.”

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"On that thing?" and Evan slanted his cane-handle toward the still moist canvas.

"'Thing' isn't polite, Evan."

"Oh, well, Jack," said his friend, turning away, "I dare say it's very splendid and original. But upon my word, it looks to me, for all the world, like a strip of mildewed wall-papering. Pray, what *is* the subject?"

Griffith threw away his cigarette and rose. "Oh, it's a study in color," he said, carelessly. "You never did know the merest alphabet of art, Evan."

"But you'd call it——"

"I'd call it—'m—well, I'd call it a Norseland sea-shore, lighted by a stormy sunset."

"Oh, really! But I——"

"Never mind." Griffith went to a table and took up an opened letter which lay there. "You asked me, my dear Evan, if there was any news. I've had this from my cousin Jack, down in Rio. He's utterly cleaned out again, and wants more help."

Evan, standing erect and handsome, with his close-cropped blond locks and his limpid blue eyes, scanned the letter, which was by no means long.

"I wouldn't give him another cent. He's always begging you to help him. And how many times *have* you sent him money, down there in Rio Janeiro?"

"Lots," muttered Griffith.

"Of course. And here are *you*, Jack——"

His friend paused, and Griffith, as it were, continued for him, with a rather weary smile on his dark, fresh, frank face:

"Here am I, Evan, you mean, with ten unsold pictures and nearly twice as many unpaid debts."

"It's your own fault, Jack. You *will* paint these extraordinary——"

"Masterpieces. Thanks. I take that as a compliment. . . . Well, we were talking about poor Jack. He's my first cousin, you know, after all. We're both Jack Griffith, both named after that misanthropic old uncle of ours, who went out West years ago and has made a huge fortune there, it's rumored, among the gold mines or the silver ones—I never exactly learned which. He quarrelled with each of our dead fathers, and Jack and I, a few years ago, used to compare notes—family annals, as it were—and try to decide which of our fathers it was whom Uncle John hated the most. Jack was the eldest son of the eldest son, you know,

and that always made him put on airs concerning our opulent uncle. He used to say that *his* father had once had the cool courage to tell Uncle John he'd cheated both his brothers in the distribution of the family inheritance."

"Perhaps he did," said Evan Mowbray, musingly.

Griffith bridled. "My dear Evan, please recollect that I reserve to myself the privilege of insulting my own relations." Then, with drowsy irony: "I shouldn't be surprised, though, if you were right. Only, the greater wrong, I'm nearly sure, was done to Jack's father. There was some business partnership between Uncle Ralph and Uncle John. Jack often referred to that; he knows twice as much about it as I do. . . . Upon my word, I wished he'd gone out there to Nevada, or wherever it is, and asked Uncle John for a hundred thousand or so as amends for his fraternal scampishness, instead of dancing down to Rio on a wild-goose chase after buried diamonds that were probably ten miles from the place in which his hare-brained companions believed them."

"And now, Jack," said Evan, with a sombre look of reprimand, "you *know* that you shouldn't give this scapegoat kinsman another dime. Promise me you will not?" And Evan, who dearly loved and admired his friend, laid a hand on Griffith's shoulder.

"Lord save us," was the gentle and mournful answer, "I haven't got many more dimes to send. I suppose that as long as I have any, though, I *will* send." Here the young artist glanced toward the easel that upbore his latest landscape. He was very well aware that Evan considered it a daub; but that knowledge did not alter his own conviction that it was a masterpiece of "symphonic" and "symbolic" impressionism.

"We somehow never get on, nowadays. We need only talk with one another five minutes to find ourselves fighting like cat and dog."

Griffith said this in his easy, dreamy way, several hours later, amid the music and babble of a ball at Sherry's. He looked very handsome, though a trifle worried and fatigued. Evening-dress always became his olive, oval, face; the white tie at his throat seemed to deepen the soft brilliancy of his peculiar, dusky eyes.

"I never saw but one man who had eyes at all like yours," the lady to whom he now spoke had once told him. "That was

Edwin Booth, whose eyes were a kind of golden black. Yours are smaller, and haven't the same trick of occasional metallic splendor. But you ought, nevertheless, to be proud of the resemblance."

She used to say things like this to him in the early days of their intimacy. But latterly, as Griffith put it, she was forever scolding him, and "getting up rows." Personally, she was very winsome and elegant, a blonde, with the most delightful wild-rose coloring. She carried her slender figure so that all its willowy curves made the nicest harmonious interplay. Her name was Mrs. Rochester; she had married at an early age, and now, though scarcely thirty, was a widow, rich, courted, with a position that hundreds of her own sex envied her.

"You're shockingly rude," she murmured to Griffith. "It's lucky no one heard what you've just said, or I should have been compelled to quarrel with you."

"But you're always quarrelling with me," moaned Griffith.

"I mean—seriously."

"I've never known it to be any other way, I'm sure. You wouldn't speak to me for six weeks, you know."

"I supposed that was settled, Jack. Besides, I *did* speak to you—more or less."

"A good deal less than more. I lived on snubs, like a dog on bones. And they were pretty bare bones, too. . . . Will you dance? And I'll tell you, while we're dancing, just how you wrung my soul."

"I'm so angry that I wouldn't," murmured Mrs. Rochester, "if you didn't dance remarkably well."

"Oh, you've told me that before, and I always suspect that you mean it to give me a kind of dig in the ribs——"

"Jack!" They were moving about the floor, now. People looked at them and said, "What a nice pair they make!—both so handsome!" Then whispers were exchanged. "Why doesn't she marry him?" and "Has he asked her?" and "Good gracious, he's horribly poor, nowadays, you know," and "They say she keeps on refusing him once every week, regularly, by the day and the time of the clock."

But these were only the airy fatuities of gossip. Griffith had always told himself that Sara Rochester would laugh in his face if he ever dared to propose marriage. He was all very well to dance with, and to fight with, and to call on at the last minute for one of her nice little dinners, when somebody else couldn't



come and had left that vacuum which society, no less than nature, abhors. . . . But ask her to marry him! Why, she'd tell him he was crazy; that was all it would be. And instead of getting on together as they did, now and then being partners at the Delmonico and Sherry germans, now and then meeting in Tuxedo at a club-house ball, now and then staying at the same country-house and behaving "chummy" to one another during the Meadowbrook hunts—now and then, in short, reaping solid enjoyment from each other's company—instead of all this, Griffith had solemnly mused, it would just be the end of everything with the dear little woman, and some other fellow would step in, and he'd get a dazzling, inscrutable smile the next time he spoke to her at an Assembly or a Patriarchs' or any other confounded place, and she'd glide off from him on the other fellow's arm, and there would be an end of his treasured intimacy with the sweetest and loveliest woman in the town,—not to mention all other towns on the habitable globe.

"'Dig in the ribs,' Jack, I will *not* stand," said Mrs. Rochester, while they glided along together. "You *know* I will not. . . ."

"Of course I do," sighed Griffith, as he danced, with his slow, capable step. "I'd like to see any man dare to do it. I'd . . . well, I'd kill him here in this ballroom."

He heard her irrepressible laugh bubble up in the region of his right shoulder. "How *dare* you? I wasn't thinking of that. I meant your *phrase*. . . . Why will you talk in such vulgar style? you, who tell me that you're a poet-painter or a painter-poet—which is it?"

"Both—when I'm with you."

"I began to-night by lecturing you."

"Yes; I know. Scalping me."

"You're wasting your time scandalously. You've got an idea that you can paint in a new, astonishing fashion. You caught it from some of those artists you saw last year in Paris. You did some really good work before that. If you'd gone on, being industrious and sincere in your own line of accomplishment, and not drifted into all sorts of lazy habits both before then and since then, you might—"

"Heavens! Do spare me!" entreated Griffith. He had his revenge an instant later. He paused in the dance with his most genial bow, and placed his partner just at the side of a certain ravaged widower, Mr. Vanderdecken, whose attentions he knew that Sara Rochester almost loathed. . . .

"I saw you commit your act of dastardly desertion," said Evan Mowbray to him, as they left the ball together, a little while before the beginning of the german. "Instead of aggravating that woman as you're constantly doing, Jack, why on earth don't you ask her to marry you?"

They were walking side by side along the still, starlit avenue.

"As if she would, Evan! Besides, I don't aggravate her. She's forever nagging at me."

"'Nagging' is beautiful, Jack, to say of one's lady-love."

"She isn't my lady-love, as you romantically put it. She'd no more accept me than the man in the moon—if there were one. . . . Besides," Griffith added, gravely, "I hope I've too much self-respect to ask her. Everybody'd say—you know what everybody'd say, Evan."

"Damn what everybody'd say," retorted Mowbray, stoutly.

"You've been awfully fond of her for three years, and *she* . . . why, the 'nagging' you speak of, old boy, only means how fond she is of *you*!"



"It's too late for Delmonico's, isn't it?" said Griffith, as they neared that far-famed inn. "Come across Madison Square to my diggings, Ev, and I'll give you——"

"Not a drop more. I've had two glasses of champagne and a slice of canvas-back, and I'll be sworn——"

"Oh, well, don't swear or be sworn," said Griffith, drowsily. "How nice that Farragut statue of St. Gaudens's looks under the electrics,

doesn't it? *There's* an artist, Ev. . . . So you will come? I'll take your arm through the park. So dangerous, don't you know? Tramps and sandbaggers, and all that sort of thing. It's only a bottle of very old Scotch, which my dear friend, Algy

Gladwin, sent me over from London last month. There were six. If I'm not mistaken," he added, dryly, "you drank the other five——"

"I, Jack! How outrageous of you!"

"——With my assistance, after balls, dinners and other powwows like the present."

"You may well say 'with my assistance,'" grumbled Mowbray. "As I perceive," he added, in amicable sarcasm, "that you're grossly intoxicated, I'll see you across the Park to the stoop of your residence."

He did more. As Griffith turned up the lights in his studio a letter caught his eye, lying on a little dark table where his mail was usually placed.

"Another dunning screed, I suppose." The envelope gave a spiteful crackle as he tore it open.

"Your fire hasn't quite gone out yet, Jack," said Mowbray. "I see some embers there, and I know where you keep your wood. . . ."

"Evan!"

"Eh? Behind that folderol Japanese curtain, isn't it? I'll just——"

"Evan!"

Griffith had caught his friend's wrist. With the other disengaged hand he lifted a letter high, so that the two fresh-lit gas-burners could strike it. Then, flutteringly, he gave the letter to Mowbray. He himself flung his form into an arm-chair.

"Read, Ev, read."

"Read what?" came the half dazed reply.

"That—*that!* Uncle John's dead, out in Nevada, and he's left me two millions. Some lawyers there write to some lawyers here. There can't be any mistake. *Read!*"

"I wonder how people will act," said Griffith to himself, quite late on the following afternoon. He had taken for granted that everything would get into the papers, sooner or later, but he hadn't been prepared for the perfectly flamboyant account of his new inheritance with which three or four journals had greeted him while busied over his coffee and egg. "Confound their calling me a second-rate painter!" he muttered. This was a stab whose wound even last night's benign tidings could not properly salve. It meant a very sharp thorn under a very big rose.

Later came talks with the lawyers downtown. Griffith signed a few papers, and tried to look abstracted and semi-indifferent. All the while he felt either as if his feet were a pair of wings or else as if his arms were. When he got uptown again he remembered that he had a certain sum in a bank there, which only yesterday had seemed to him like a snowdrift under the spell of a vigorous thaw. Now he went to the bank and drew a fairly large check with wholly altered feelings. In a week or so, the lawyers had suavely told him, he would have so much "ready money" that the affair of its prompt yet judicious investment might prove a trifle embarrassing.

"I suppose I'll have lots of fun watching how people behave," he mused, as he strolled along the Avenue, past the marble majesties of the Manhattan Club and the brand-new altitudes of the Waldorf. "Here comes Doddridge the multi-millionaire. He generally gives me a nod about two inches deep. I wonder what he'll do now."

Mr. Doddridge bowed so appreciably and beamed so sunnily that Griffith half expected him to stop and reach forth a hand. "Oh, money, money," he murmured below his mustache. "What's that thing I learned in college? *Aurea sacra famem*. . . . No, I'm afraid that isn't right. I never *could* quote a line of Latin right. . . . Here's the Effinghams'. I'll drop in; it's their big tea; the awning's up, and all these carriages are threatening to smash each other; yes, this must be the day of their pow-wow, and I'm sure I'm asked. So here goes."

He knew a great many people in the thronged drawing-rooms. Everybody's bow was somehow different from of old—more interested, more animated. He spoke to several ladies with whom he was but slightly acquainted, and found that they treated him with a sort of repressed astonishment not exempt from a certain feverish and novel cordiality. Finally, he came face to face with Mrs. Rochester.

"In mercy's name," she faltered, "what are you doing here?"

"I don't know that I'm doing anything here in mercy's name," he answered. "A fellow usually doesn't, does he, at these afternoon crushes? Unless you mean," he added, meekly, "that so many women come to them and so few men——"

"I mean nothing of the sort, Jack. I've *heard*, you understand."

"M—yes. I thought you had. Isn't it jolly?"

She gave him a quick, severe glance, lowering her eyes the next instant.

"It may be jolly enough, but you might have the good taste to think so in private."

"In private?"

"Certainly. If you haven't any respect for the memory of an uncle who's behaved so generously to you, you might at least cultivate the *appearance* of some. Your being here like this is too *awful*. For a year, *certainly*, you shouldn't be seen out, and here you are, without a scrap of mourning, on the very day after you've heard of your uncle's death."

Griffith gave a forlorn start. "By Jove! I forgot all about it!" Then he pursued, plaintively, "But, you see, I've never even set eyes on him."

"Do hush!" grimly commanded Mrs. Rochester. "People are listening to every word you say. This is so *exactly* like you. Upon my word——"

"There, now," he broke in, with great sadness, "you're going to scold again! But I suppose you're right this time."

"*This* time!" she bristled.

"I'll—I'll cut—excuse me, I'll go straight away. I'll go and buy black studs and a 'weeper' for my hat, and all that sort of thing. I'm so glad you told me. Nobody else did."

"Nobody else cared—I mean, knew you well enough to care," frowned Mrs. Rochester. "Now, for the sake of decency, slip at once from the house."

"Of course I will—of course," stammered poor Griffith. "But I can drop in on you this evening, can't I, at say nine or——?"

"I'm dining out, and going afterward to the Poughkeepsies' ball," came her cold response.

"The Poughkeepsies' ball—yes; I was going there myself. But now I—yes, of course; good-by. . . ." And Griffith, with a suppressed sigh at the glacial glance she shot toward him, steered himself miserably out of the rooms.

He quickly left the house likewise. "Of course," he meditated, "I've made the biggest kind of blunder. She's right; I begin to think she's nearly always right—except about my pictures. They're not the daubs she's more than hinted they are. Now that I can paint with glorious leisure, I'll achieve such a masterpiece that she'll have to knock under and admit she was wrong. What fun to stand by and watch her face while she gives in, lowers her colors, and all that!"

Somewhat later this same evening, he appeared at his club in decorous mourning garb. It chanced that only a few of his intimate friends were present, though the big rooms were somewhat crowded. The men whom he knew well shook hands with him and said cordially congratulatory things. That was all in the proper course of affairs, but soon he had evidence of striking change. Men who had forgotten for weeks to bow to him came up and genially gripped his hand. One man, whom he had cut because he believed him to be a cad (possessing somewhat powerful proof of it), approached with a face wrinkled into the most obsequious of smiles. A notorious snob, of great wealth and intensely exclusive ideas, bowed to him with radiant affability. The pompous and enormously wealthy Mr. Quackenboss crossed the room and shook him smilingly by the hand. Van Courtlandt Van Wagēnen, who rarely spoke to anyone out of his own little cōterie of airy plutocrats, actually laid a hand on his shoulder and called him "my dear boy," and spoke of their two mothers having been second cousins. . . . And so it went on, to the infinite amusement of Griffith.

He left the club that night in a rather melancholy mood, however. "What a world! what a world!" he cogitated, while stepping into a cab at the club-door. "I'm learning a lesson in human nature that might turn an angel into a satyr! . . . Well, anyhow, there's one human being I believe in, and to-morrow I'll go and tell her that I'm able to ask her if she'll marry me, and that I'd never have asked her unless I could have done it with the certainty that nobody would call me a fortune-hunter. . . . I wonder what she'll say. . . . No, I don't wonder a bit. I'm sure she'll stop scolding me, once and for all, and—consent to be Mrs. Jack Griffith." . . . Then, with a qualm of doubt, he pursued: "Well, if I'm not precisely sure, I'm at least devilish *hopeful!*"

But on the morrow he was confronted by bitter disappointment. Mrs. Rochester received him with icy repose.

"Oh, good Lord!" he lamented; "haven't you got over that yet?"

"Got over *what* yet, if you please?"

"Why, what I did yesterday. Look at this get-up." And Griffith opened both arms, glancing down at his person. "I'm a perfect crow of blackness. The raven's wing isn't a circumstance to me."

“Oh, I had forgotten your dreadful *gaucherie*,” said Mrs. Rochester, with the tips of her lips. “I was thinking——” and she paused, with a sharp sigh.

“Well?” he queried.



“Oh,” she suddenly cried, “the idea of *your* having all that money! It will ruin you, Jack! You’re not fit for it!”

“Thanks; thanks awfully.”

“Now, don’t look as if I’d insulted you.”

“I’ll try my best to look otherwise,” he returned, with grim meekness.

"You *know* that I'm right," she protested, her agitation pricking through her coldness. "What on earth will you ever do with all that money except be horribly extravagant with it? Frankly, I *must* tell you that I believe it will lead you into all sorts of follies."

"What kinds of follies?" asked Griffith, studying the gloss on one of his boots, and at the same time playing automatically with his watch-chain.

"Oh, I don't mean—dissipations. You're above those, I hope."

"But, follies. You mean follies?"

"Yes."

Griffith raised his eyes. "Would you call it a folly," he said, "if I asked you to be my wife? That was the first one I thought of when the news of my altered luck had fully dawned upon me."

Her face flushed and then paled. She bit her lip, and slowly yet excitedly answered him.

"I'm an unpurchasable folly, if you please. You can't buy me."

"Oh, Sara!" He rose, feeling so hurt that his heart weighed, for an instant, like a lump of lead in his breast. Without knowing it, he plunged both hands deep into his trousers' pockets. It was just like him to reveal a romantic emotion in this solidly prosaic style.

"I didn't want to ask you before," he went on, "because I felt that people would call me a fortune-hunting kind of fellow. I—I've been horribly fond of you for over two years, and I supposed you might have seen it. You're rich, you know, and I didn't want——"

She broke in with a light, curt laugh.

"So, now that you can make people think I take *you* for *your* money, you're perfectly willing to ask me. But how about *my* feelings as regards what people will say? I haven't two millions, or anything like that sum. It isn't pleasant for me to realize that if I married you everybody would accredit me with sordid motives."

Rarely made angry by any event, habituated to many "scoldings" (as he was wont to call them) from this woman, whom, in his odd, placid way, he inestimably treasured, Griffith now felt his choler rise and kindle.

"Oh, then, good-morning," he said, more sternly by far than



she had ever heard him speak. "Good-morning and—good-by."

"Good-by," she echoed; and with the perverse cruelty that some women can show, when the dictates of caprice grow stronger than those of equity and fair-mindedness, she let her voice cuttingly say, just as he crossed the threshold of her room:

"Purse-proud already. A fine beginning."

He not only heard the words, but they dealt him a rankling wound. Going home to his chambers, he kept hearing them in his brain, and entering his studio he seemed to find them waiting him there, like a presence disembodied yet vocal.

But he had not much time to heed their taunting iteration, for his eye chanced to light on a letter, which he raised from the table where it lay. The name of his new lawyers—Atterbury, Chalmers and Wentworth—gleamed from a corner of the envelope.

"Devil take it," he murmured aloud, "I hope they don't want me down there again to-day. I'm in no state to go, after——"

By this time he had torn open the envelope, and unfolded two formidable pages of type-writing. He sank lazily into his favorite arm-chair and began to read. On a sudden he gave a low, pained cry.

"I've knocked three times, Jack," said Evan Mowbray, quite a good while afterward, "and got no answer. So I concluded to try if the door was locked or not. . . . Why, how pale you are! What's happened?"

"This," said Griffith. Seated inertly in the arm-chair, he handed his friend the lawyers' letter.

Evan ran his eye over the first page. "Whew!" he ejaculated. Then he submitted the second page to a like process.

"Jack! Jack! This is too terrible!"

"It's a good deal of a knock-down," said Griffith, rising and stretching his limbs. "But I suppose I've got to stand it. Those idiots needn't have taken me for the other Jack Griffith down in Rio, if their wits hadn't been wool-gathering. I've a good mind to sue them for—breach of promise? No; that isn't it. What is it I *could* sue them for Ev? You see, they admit themselves that the name specified in the will of the late John Griffith was, all the while, the name of the son of Ralph Griffith, his eldest brother. I wasn't even mentioned. The whole two millions are left to Rio Janeiro Jack, and not to your humble

friend, New York Jack. 'In recompense for a great wrong which I once did my brother, Ralph,' reads the document, 'I will and bequeath to his only son, John,' etc., etc. And they had that full quotation *out* of the document sent them from Nevada, and yet they committed this infernal blunder! Well," finished Griffith, with a bleak laugh that somehow ended melodiously, "I suppose I've got to stand it."

Evan went up to him and wrung his hand. "I think you're standing it magnificently. *I* should go crazy. Nearly every other man would whom I know. At least, I mean, for a time."



"What earthly sense would there be in going crazy, Evan,—even for a time? . . . No," he added, with soft ruminations, "I'll try to keep sane, and watch how those fellows act to me there at the club. The papers will get hold of it, of course, just as they got hold of it before. And I'll be quietly hooted at, just as I was flattered and felicitated."

The papers did get hold of it, and published with what seemed to Griffith agonizing detail, long accounts of the whole ridiculous

error. But the prophesied "hooting" was very politely concealed, if it indeed ever took place. A certain kind of sarcastic compassion was more than once manifest, however, and this hurt Griffith worse than open "chaffing." After a day or two he found himself seated before his easel, powerless to paint, and murmuring half aloud, after every two or three ineffectual strokes of the brush, words like:—

"By Jove, I didn't know it could be so deucedly unpleasant to have people feel sorry for you!"

All the while he was thinking of *her*, and wondering whether *she* had felt sorry, in the really right and generous way. His anger had entirely fled; he never could stay angry very long with anyone; his nature was too replete with loving-kindness for that. And when a short note came to him in her hand-writing, bidding him "drop in that afternoon between four and five," he kissed it, and smiled a little over it, and shed several authentic tears over it, and obeyed its rather unsympathetic summons.



Mrs. Rochester, when they met, gave him her hand. He pressed it in silence, and as she withdrew it she burst out laughing.

"Jack, I'm awfully sorry," she said.

"Really? I—I thought you'd be glad."

"Glad? Why, what on earth *do* you take me for?"

He hesitated, and then answered, in his innocent, amiable way: "For the most charming woman in the world."

He saw her eyes close, her lips quiver. "And you," she suddenly exclaimed, "are the most aggravating, exasperating—angel! There!"

She swept away from him, and he followed her, and slipped in front of her and saw that she was weeping.

"Oh, Sara," he faltered, "you *are* sorry for me!"

"Hush!"

She caught his hand. "I insulted you the other day! I ought to have been ashamed of myself!"

This dizzied him.

"Look out, now," he ventured, in solemn remonstrance. "You don't mean that. You're—you're giving yourself away. You'll

regret it afterward, I'm afraid, and then you'll scold me like fury if I ever remind you that you said it."

She wheeled full round so that she fronted him, with all the sweet bewitching grace of her tearful eyes and tremulous frame.

"Jack, I *want* to give myself away! That's why I wrote you to come. I want to give myself away to *you*! Jack, will you be my husband?"

"I wish the other Jack all kind of happiness with those two millions," said Griffith that night to Evan Mowbray at the club. "I don't want them any more. I had them, you know, for about twenty-four hours or so, and I feel that I got a vast amount of good out of them. I only hope that ne'er-do-well cousin of mine will be able to say as much!"





BY L. B. WALFORD

"Through wish, resolve, and act, our will  
Is moved by undreamed forces still;  
And no man measures in advance  
His strength with untried circumstance."

WHITTIER.



AN you see what the names are? I am a bit short-sighted, and they are beyond my range."

The scene was within the quadrangle of Burlington House, where on the wall had been posted, a few minutes before, a sheet of paper inscribed with a few names—a very few names—only three in all, which, belonging to the successful candidates in the Ceylon Civil Examination, were thus to be announced to all whom it might concern. The contest had been even more severe than usual, for there were but three vacancies, and between seventy and eighty young men had entered the lists.

Week after week had passed since the closing day, and still no sign had been vouchsafed by the authorities; but at last there had been some signs of life within the grim walls, and a young man who had made inquiry daily, and daily been informed that the-result was as yet unknown, had been bidden return within the hour on presenting himself at Burlington House on the morning in question. He had done so, and it was he who now besought the good offices of another, on the plea of short-sightedness.

"Barton Manningham Allerton, first," read the person thus applied to, with slow distinctness, for he could only just decipher the characters himself; "John George Merewether, second; John Wilkinson, third." Then he turned and looked at his interrogator.

\* A Selection from "Longman's Magazine."

A quick flush had mounted to the young man's face, and the mask of careless curiosity had dropped from it.

Yet he strove not to betray too much. "Ah—thank you—would you mind—what did you say was the first name, *exactly?*" he stammered, his breath catching a little.

- "Barton—Manningham—Allerton," repeated his informant, with a pause between each word.

"Much obliged." Barton Manningham Allerton dropped his cane upon the pavement, and, picking it up, walked away.

Although the month was December, he fancied himself blinded by the sunshine which flared into his eyes. He also fancied he had not a very firm grip of the paving-stones beneath his feet, and was obliged to be very careful in order not to knock against people nor to jostle them. In crossing the streets he was most particular not to be run over; insomuch that once a crossing-sweeper, in stature up to his elbow, jeeringly proffered his services: "Now, don't you be afeard. You jist kitch 'old o' me, and I'll see that nobody does you any damage."

The urchin's voice sounded strange and far off in Barton Manningham Allerton's ears. He did not feel inclined to laugh, nor did he put his fingers in his pocket for a penny. Instead, he turned upon the youthful satirist a pair of soulless orbs, whose expression was so helpless, so mystified, so strange altogether, that impish Dick Castaway never forgot it, and related the tale to his mates with peals of shrill laughter at the close of the day.

Having carefully picked his way across, halting upon the "refuge" in the centre, until he was taken in tow by a policeman piloting a covey of females, this peculiarly timid stranger—a fine, athletic young fellow, who looked the very man to enjoy a wild chaos of horses' noses and hoofs—solemnly stalked along Piccadilly for about a third of a mile, then recrossed with equal precision, and presently found himself at the spot whence he had before started. As a fact, he did not know where he was going, and only as much as a semi-drunken man does of what he was doing. He was walking about in London; and to safely walk about in London with half one's wits asleep, requires the other half to be very wide awake indeed. Hence all this circumlocution on the part of our wool-gatherer.

Finally, he got into an omnibus bound for a North London station, and sat there with a faint smile on his face, elicited by the relief of having at last reached a place where it was safe to sit down.

This was how Barty Allerton took the news of his success—a success which to him meant almost everything the world could give.

He was young, strong, handsome, clever; he longed to be in the thick of the battle-fray of life; to wring from it not only its rewards and prizes, but its experience, its deep draughts of knowledge, its stores of strange and mystic wisdom. There was so much to be seen and done—there were such innumerable paths to be trodden—such hundreds of worlds to conquer, if only he could be up and at them!

Hitherto he had made his mark on every little by-way he had passed along; he had been head-boy of the grammar school, and medallist of the public school; he had won an Oxford scholarship, and had taken an Oxford degree. Yet, with it all, his future was not clear before him.

This may seem strange; but somehow such strange things do happen.

All goes along well in life up to a certain point; and then comes a deadlock.

Perhaps there is no opening? Perhaps when the opening comes, there is not money to take advantage of it? Perhaps there is no family influence? Perhaps the talents which have carried all before them, when "all" meant laurels won by dint of concentrated resolution and steadfast application in a certain and limited groove, fail to be negotiable when brought into the great market of the world?

Be that as it may, Barty Allerton had left the University, and knew not whither he was bound. He was poor, and work he must. Nay, he loved work for its own sake; but just when it was absolutely necessary to be earning his own livelihood he had realized with surprise that there was nothing for him to do.

Then, all at once came his opportunity, and that at the precise moment when the want of fortune, the want of influence, the want of a projectile in any shape was beginning to make itself most keenly felt. Of late everybody who came to his father's house had said, "Why don't you try for this?" or "Why don't you go in for that?" But when inquiries had been made anent the suggestion, it had been pretty sure to turn out that the business or profession either necessitated some specific education which he had not got, or that the knowledge he had would be thrown away.

Occasionally there had been an ominous hint let fall. He had

been asked how old he was. Three-and-twenty is not a great age; but our young man was perfectly aware that his Job's comforters knew what they were talking about, when they shook their heads over it, and wondered whether or not he were "past the age." In these days the bough has to be bent in the given direction so very soon.

So that there were plenty of people found to prophesy that in spite of Barty Allerton's double row of school prizes, his Oxford scholarship and Oxford degree he would find himself out in the cold one of these days if he did not get something to do pretty sharp. He "did not mean to be a parson"? He "detested medicine"? He "shied at the bar"? Pray, what did he want? If he had thought sooner about the army—but after all it would have been rather a "come down" for the wonderful scion of the Allerton family (and here it must be owned the gossips were somewhat inclined to curl their lips) to have been gazetted into a regiment of the line, and thenceforth vanish from the paths of scholarship.

"What on earth—Barty Allerton still hanging on at home? Got nothing to do yet?" one would say to the other—and eyebrows had begun to be raised, and shoulders shrugged. There had even been a terrible whisper in the air. "Hasn't that young Allerton been somewhat over-rated, eh? Did such wonders at school! Supported himself at college! And now—eh?" And if the speakers chanced to have sons of their own, it is conceivable that a secret and involuntary joy occasionally entered into the conversation at this juncture, when it was remembered how Barty's parents had gloried in the prowess of their first-born, believing that he had no equal in all the length and breadth of the land.

It was, I think, an intuitive perception of this which, as much as anything else, made the young man's head swim and his pulses throb, as he walked away from Burlington House with the words "Barton Manningham Allerton" ringing in his ears.

Not merely had he won his laurels—he had escaped from the edge of a precipice. He had vindicated himself. There would no longer be the half-smile he had been accustomed to see accompany the greeting, "Hullo, Barty, you still about! Got nothing to do yet, eh?" He would no longer have to reply vaguely, as he had got into the habit of doing, that he had "heard of something" and was "making inquiries." He would now face his tormentors on every side.



He would take care to be met and interrogated. Then it would be, in answer to the old question, "Oh, yes, I shall be off to the East directly. I have come out first in the Ceylon Civil Examination." How people would stare!

The poor lad was not vain. In prosperity he had been modest enough. But he had been so badgered and baited; he had so dreaded the inevitable formula, and felt so keenly the truth of each well-meant hint, as well as of each innuendo, that he was really to be pardoned if he did, in the first flush of victory, long to turn the tables.

Living in a small country town, where reserve on the part of any inhabitant is neither expected nor possible, he had often felt as if he and his affairs were common talk—as indeed to a certain extent they were. He thought he would rather like to be common talk now.

And then what joy, what rapture, would there not be in the poor over-stocked home! For some weeks every one had been on the tiptoe of expectation there. It had been "Any news, Barty?" every morning and evening, after he had strolled to the garden gate, about the time the postman went by. When he had taken to running up to town, and haunting the precincts of Burlington House, there had been the same ordeal to face on his return about six o'clock. He had been irritated, and had returned many a cross answer. Why could they not let him alone?

But it all added up in the sum total of his present bliss. Kitty would be at the gate looking for him. Eva, who had a reserved disposition more akin to his own, and who in consequence understood and respected his reticence at this trying episode, would be watching from some retreat, in order to form her own conclusions from his step and air—he had caught a glimpse of her dress behind the thick stem of the ilex tree more than once of late, and guessed why it vanished on his approach)—while his mother's voice would hail him from a window; and he would see his old father stop clipping the laurels and look round—at this point Barty felt a sensation he hardly knew how to deal with. He almost wished the great moment were over!

Strange to tell, everything fell out exactly as depicted. How rarely this happens, we all know; but it did occur in the present case. Our young man caught his train down from town, and stepped out on the well-known platform, and the station-master nodded to him—a little too familiarly, he thought. Smiles did

not know that Barty had come out "first" in the list of the "Ceylon Civil."

As he walked homeward, he almost wondered that he was not accosted and congratulated—then caught himself up and hugged his secret to his heart. Outwardly, he looked so stern and uncommunicative, that one or two whom he passed on the way saluted him with a glance half interrogative, half sympathetic, not feeling quite sure that something had not come to pass the wrong way. Then, far ahead, he caught sight of Kitty's peeping face. Should he wave to her, shake his stick, or his hat, or his handkerchief? She would understand such a signal, and either dart forward to make assurance sure, or backward to spread the good news like wildfire. A curious shyness held him back from making the signal.

A pair of dogs fought in the road in front of him, and he dallied to watch which had the best of it.

"Poor Barty! As usual he has heard nothing!" said Kitty to herself.

Then, as the highway was fairly empty, she strolled forward to meet her brother, with an air of studied unconcern; for taught by Eva, she was learning not to intrude upon his anxiety.

"Come down by the three-ten train, Barty?"

"Yes. . . Just managed to catch it."

"There was nothing to keep you in town till the later train, I suppose?"

"Nothing." Barty patted the winning dog—his own—and looked away from her.

"I suppose the names will be out *some* day, Barty?" The girl could not resist a wistful sigh. "It can't go on for ever, you know."

Barty laughed nervously.

The laugh had an unnatural sound, and in an instant her quick ear detected a new emotion behind it. "You—you *have* heard something?" she cried, with a breathless suspicion. "I know you have! Oh, Barty, is it all over? And you have lost? Well, never mind, Barty; you did your best, and there are other things to try for, and you are sure to get something. Father says you must begin sooner another time, that's all. You did not give yourself time enough; take more time——"

"I sha'n't have the time to take." Her loquacity made things all at once easier. "I shall have precious little time for anything now," he went on, his eyes beginning to sparkle. "It will pretty well take up all my time getting ready my outfit."

“*What?*”

“My outfit for the East. Hush!” as her lips parted for a scream. “Hush!” cried her brother, seizing her arm. “Yes, that’s about it! It is indeed. I’m not joking. And ‘First,’ too, Kitty,” in a husky whisper. “*First*, by Jove! I can hardly yet believe it, myself; but it’s true. Stop a moment here, and I’ll tell you how I saw”—detaining her outside the holly-hedge which bounded his parents’ small domain, and narrating the circumstances already known to our readers. “By Jove! I hardly know where I am, or what I am doing! And I dare say I ought to have rushed home long ago, and told you all; but somehow I couldn’t,” he summed up in conclusion, “I felt so queer and sort of dazed, you know.”

“But, oh! let us come quick and tell now!” cried Kitty, mad with excitement. “There’s Eva, watching from behind the ilex-tree. Oh, Eva, Eva!” running forward. “Eva, what *do* you think? It’s first! *First*, Eva! Oh, there’s mother! Mother, hurrah! Hooray! Barty’s first, mother! The names are out to-day. Father, do you hear, father?” calling loudly, and in a few moments they were all running from every quarter, and Barty was the aim, the object, the centre, the apex of the crowd.

Happy? He *was* happy. In the first great shock of joy, he had been unable to realize his own sensations; but the homely outcry, the gleeful vociferations, the questions, comments, and conjectures which now whirled through the air on every side, speedily dissipated all remaining sense of unreality, and he was able to talk and laugh with any one.

A glorious time for Barty now followed.

Within a few days, every one in and around the village of Summertown had learned the fact of his success; had heard the number of candidates (trebled in Mrs. Allerton’s imagination) over whom he had triumphed; and the whole neighborhood had, with characteristic pliability, shaken hands with and proudly appropriated to itself the boy over whom so many wise heads had recently been shaken.

Barty had more invitations than he knew what to do with. All at once he must lunch or dine at every house within reach. No party was complete without him. During the autumn months he had been glad enough to fill the place of a guest who had failed, or had willingly made a fourteenth at the last moment, to avoid the dreaded number at a dinner-table. “Get Barty Allerton, if you can’t think of any one better!” had passed

between host and hostess many a time when projecting an entertainment. Now, parties were got up for Barty—literally gathered together for his especial benefit.

As for the letters and telegrams, they poured in from every quarter of the kingdom. Day after day his mother, and Kitty, and Eva sat delightedly answering and thanking; while his father brushed up his old suits, bought a new umbrella, had his hair cut, and taking his son by the arm, strutted off to look up half-forgotten cronies of former times, and to show himself at a club which now hardly knew his face.

And in spite of fits of bashfulness and the occasional necessity for an imploring "Oh, I say, I wish you wouldn't!" when the family exuberance overstepped all bounds, Barty enjoyed it all.

It would have palled upon him in time, no doubt. He could not long have endured the endless reiteration of the same theme, with the disconcerting accompaniment of maternal inaccuracy and exaggeration; but, knowing as he did that the time was short (for he received almost immediately his orders for an early departure), he generously overlooked small drawbacks, and neither permitted himself open remonstrance, nor gave way to twinges of secret annoyance.

Eva, who knew her brother best, affirmed that Barty was an angel during this trying epoch; while more critical folks went so far as to allow that young Allerton bore himself well, with a frankly acknowledged, yet withal modest, pleasure in his own success, which disarmed all beholders.

In the bustle of preparation and the earnest endeavor to save the scanty family purse, Barty also shone. He would not have one half the articles his parents wanted. He hastened from one spot to another, getting estimates and lists, doing his own shopping, and doing it as cheaply as he could. He haunted the Army and Navy Stores. One could hardly go there, morning, noon or night, without seeing Barty Allerton's face on one or other of the landings, or encountering him in the lift. He carried parcels home under his arm. At the station he would find others awaiting him. At last it became a daily habit for one or more of the younger brothers or sisters to meet the train by which he was expected, in order to assist him with his freight.

"It is just as if one of us were going to be married," quoth Kitty, with the imagination of eighteen.

Barty was to sail on the 10th of January, so all this activity was in full swing during the Christmas week.

It was the merriest Christmas his old home had ever known. If now and again a tender sigh did escape the breast of either parent, if one or other would occasionally steal a pensive glance at the joyous, youthful band, wondering if the hard lessons they had learnt must needs be taught these dear ones also, at any rate no selfish regrets or fears were ever suffered to mar Barty's hour of triumph.

"Yes, he *may* not come back for eight or ten years," quoth Mrs. Allerton, turning her face to smile at her boy, and wishing the neighbors who had dropped in would not gaze at Barty with so solemn an air; but there is quite a chance he may run over in five, and five years soon pass. Amy will be a big girl by that time, to be sure, and Carrie and Florrie, too. And he will hardly know Joey and the baby, I dare say." And she ran on in a cheerful strain, which made even Barty think his mother took the parting easily. "She has such a lot to think of," he nodded to himself.

For at the present time Joey and the baby, to say nothing of the other innumerable little ones, were very continually and somewhat aggressively *en evidence*. It seemed to Barty, after being at other houses, as if they really need not swarm into every room, and passage, and landing as they did; as if there need not invariably be such a bobbing of small heads from every window whenever he turned in at his own gate. In bitter moments, whereof he would not now willingly think, he had even told himself that these were so many dead-weights dragging him down, and that but for them a career would have opened for him easily enough long before. Even now, in his day of prosperity, he could not but feel a faint self-gratulation that the irrepressible brood would, according to his mother, be grown quite out of memory ere he saw them again. From a distance he would feel quite affectionate towards Amy, Carrie, Florry, Tottie, and the four little boys who wound up the "baker's dozen," but he had much ado to bear and forbear with them under present conditions.

All, however, went smoothly; and ten days before Barty sailed for the East he received a summons which he had been somewhat surprised at not getting before. Sir Barton Allerton, his father's cousin, and the head of the family, had indeed scrawled a rapid note—a great thing for him to do—congratulating and inclosing a check; but though the expressions contained in the former were cordial and the face of the latter satisfactory, there had been no invitation to pay a farewell visit to North Allerton Manor.

"No doubt he thinks you have no time to go," suggested Barty's mother, comfortably. She was fingering the check as she spoke. "And, of course, it is a long journey to take. Still, I thought they would have asked you."

Barty had thought so too. He had felt a momentary chill; but then so many people had asked him, and he was being so much thought of and sought after, and was so entirely the hero of the hour, that the feeling had passed; and he had forgotten all about the matter, when a second note from the manor contained an invitation coupled with a tempting programme. A ball in the house, tableaux in the neighborhood, a hunt-breakfast, and several minor festivities were about to take place, and if Barty could spare time to run north and say "Good-by," he would come in for them all. "As we shall not see anything of you for so long a time to come, we hope you will manage to give us a few days," concluded Lady Allerton, feeling that she was very warm and gracious in so wording her invitation; and "Really she writes uncommonly kindly!" cried Barty's mother on receiving it.

There was no question about Barty's going. He had nearly completed his arrangements; all his orders had been given; and he had been actually considering what he should do with the clear space in front, when the summons came. He dashed up to town, and returned bearing in one hand his new portmanteau, in the other his bag. By good luck the initials "B. M. A." had been put on each only the day before.

How delightful it was to use some of the new articles of the "trousseau," as Kitty called it! He had had several little presents, too; new sleeve-links; a diamond stud; a pair of ivory brushes, with his monogram on the back; a case of razors—in short, quite a small paraphernalia, of which a few weeks previously he would have been utterly devoid. His boots and shoes were all new and fashionable; he thought he would take them all. Not that he would need so many, but then he might; and, at any rate, the servants would see them about in his room. With his sticks he strapped in his new silver-mounted umbrella. And when he stepped forward to take his railway ticket he was equipped in a long drab overcoat of the latest pattern, had on his head a regulation travelling hat, held a pair of dogskin gloves in his hand, and was altogether a very well turned-out, trim, smart-looking fellow indeed.

The excitement, the fun of the whole thing, made his eyes sparkle and his cheeks glow. He had wrested all this from For-

tune; and Fortune, he felt, now bowed before him. This visit to his relations was the coping-stone to all that had transpired before. The flattery and jocosity of his own small world was beginning to stale upon his senses; he had experienced a longing to get away for a breathing space before the final wrench came; and to be going to a place where he was not to be A 1, and yet where he would, of course, be of *some* importance (so he put it modestly to himself), was just the right thing.

All the way down he chatted good-humoredly with his fellow-travellers. They did not know, he felt, what a great man they were conversing with. *He* would not tell them—not he! He was pleased to think how easy, and friendly, and unconstrained he was.

When he jumped into Sir Barton's dogcart after leaving the train, he opened fire on the old coachman who chanced to drive him up, and whom he had known from boyhood, with a host of questions anent the family affairs, involuntarily considering that it would be pleasant for old Jenkins to see that he was still as much interested in these as formerly. Jenkins, of course, knew that he was going out to the East directly?

Jenkins had heard so, and hoped Master Barty would not find it very hot.

Barty laughed, and by-and-by let himself be drawn out, being, in truth, so full of this one subject, that it was almost impossible for him to stick long to any other.

Then he was shown into a drawing-room full of people, and his reception there was all he could have desired; for his host came forward with a hearty "Hullo, Barty, my boy. Well done, old fellow! Exams. seem to agree with you, eh?" accompanied by a slap on the back, and a roar of jovial congratulatory laughter; and next he was conducted up to her ladyship, who made haste to pour forth a pretty speech, and remark, as her husband had done, on his good looks, "in spite of those *dreadful cruel* examinations," and as he turned away he heard his prowess recounted for the benefit of the surrounding ladies, who with one accord turned their heads his way and exclaimed, "How interesting!"

Five o'clock tea was going on, and a group of young people, most of them cousins of some sort or other, were eating and drinking and chatting round the teacups, which were arranged on small tables at the far end of the room. Some of the girls were pretty; some of the men were handsome; and all were, or

seemed, good-natured. In particular Walter, his cousin Walter, the eldest of the party, was very good-natured. Walter was not strong enough, he averred, to be any good in the world himself. He had such a beastly bad head, and was so beastly nervous, he was sure he should never get through a beastly exam.; he could only fall down and worship any fellow who did. Hadn't Barty had an awful time of it? Could he sleep at nights? Could he eat his meals?

Barty rather wondered why everybody laughed at this. Walter was sitting on the edge of a chair eating muffins; he did not know what he had said that was funny, he alleged; and reached forward his hand for another quarter of a muffin as he spoke.

"Well, Reggie got through his exam. well enough," said another brother. "Of course, he did not come out first, as Barty has."

"Rather not. It was the narrowest squeak," from Walter.

"At any rate, he got through. Barty, how long is it since you saw Reggie? He is here, you know. Here, on leave, and we sha'n't get rid of him for another month. It seems to me that fellow is always on leave; and when he isn't, he is in splendid quarters. At York, you know. The most run after quarters in England. Ah, here he comes!" and Barty had another cheery greeting from another friendly voice, and thought he had never before done justice to the claims of Captain Reginald Allerton, the gayest, smartest, most notable "all around" man of the Allerton family.

In short, the boy's cup was full, and his heart overflowed with gratitude and affection towards everybody.

With what pleasure he made his evening toilet! All his little accoutrements had been carefully laid out, and he derived fresh satisfaction from each new article worn for the first time. He had gone off rather early to dress, and, as nothing went amiss, was down before anyone else, and half inclined to back out of the great lamp-lit drawing-room, and retreat upstairs again to wait the second summons of the gong, when he was conscious of a rustle of skirts behind him.

One of his new friends of the tea-table, no doubt? That was all right. The girls had all been as "jolly" to him as the men, and when the little party had broken up, he had been so entirely at ease with them all that he turned round with a sensation of relief, prepared to take up the ball and carry it on where it had been left off.



The next moment he had his breath taken away! Who was this?

He knew, indeed, that there were more people in the house than he had yet seen. He had heard allusions made to one and another, inquiries and asides which had reference to guests not present, but he had set down these absentees in his own mind as older folks, contemporaries of Sir Barton and Lady Allerton, people who had to rest in the afternoon and take care of themselves; and notably a certain "Lady Evelyn," of whom he had heard Captain Allerton remark that she had gone to lie down, and was having her tea sent upstairs, he had dismissed from his imagination as an absolutely certain member of the feeble contingent.

Several queries regarding this Lady Evelyn had been made upon the entrance of Reggie. It appeared that he had been driving her in his phaeton, and was thus the latest authority; and Barty had for a moment vaguely felt that it was an instance of good-nature on the part of the dashing soldier to tool about an old woman who had to go and lie down after her drive.

He understood Captain Allerton's good-nature now.

For he saw before him the lovely, charming face of a girl in the first flush of youth, and in the involuntary halt and hesitation of her light step which betrayed that he was as much a stranger to her as she to him, he discerned the Lady Evelyn whom he had pictured so different.

Was it the stupidity of so egregious an error which made him now thrill to his finger-tips? Of course. One does not like to have made a fool of oneself, even in secret. It is enough to make one feel confused and uncomfortable. Barty was struggling to recover self-possession when Fate helped him.

Two children rushed tumultuously into the room; then stopped short, staring; and the whole quartette were so obviously at a deadlock that the case was desperate; the case, indeed, was so desperate that the little boy, a gallant little fellow of seven, rose to the occasion.

"How do you do, sir?" said he, manfully holding out his hand, and stepping up to Barty. "I know who you are. Cissy doesn't," casting a withering glance at her; "but, then, you see, she's younger. She doesn't know much. You are the gentleman who won the medal—wasn't that it? We were talking about you in the nursery. Your name is Barton Manningham Allerton. I wish mine was. And, I say, have you brought the medal with you? Let Cissy and me see it," eagerly pressing closer. "Cissy,

shake hands. We're Percival and Cissy Manningham, and we're stopping here like you—and——"

"And will you present me to that lady, also?" said Barty, coloring very much, but feeling it must be done, for the young lady, who was even younger than himself, was looking at him with a shy interest which betokened her approachable. "You are quite right about me, but——" and he tried to talk easily, and to look politely and indifferently interrogative.

"Oh, that's Lady Evelyn," replied the little boy, promptly. "I say, I don't know your other name," to her. "We always call you Lady Evelyn, but you can tell him the rest of it, if you like," with a patronizing wave of the hand. "Hi, Cissy, there's the second gong going to be sounded," and away the two dashed to a new excitement.

Ah, well! it ill behooves a third person to speak of the brief quarter of an hour which followed.

Only fifteen minutes! And in fifteen minutes the mischief was done. How it came about, Barty Allerton never knew, although every tone and movement in that little trivial scene became burnt into his memory, branded as it were with a hot iron, presently; but at the moment he was only conscious of a confused sensation of delight, and—all was over.

The boy within him was a boy no longer. He had tasted of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and his head swam with the intoxicating draught.

And what was it all? Wherein lay the spell?

This was pretty much all that passed. "You arrived when I was out this afternoon?" in feminine accents.

"I believe so. I came about five o'clock."

"You are going to stay for the ball?"

"Yes; I believe so. I can only stay a few days."

"I know; you are going to Ceylon. What day do you sail?"

A few explanations. Then, shyly, Lady Evelyn: "We heard of your great success. Sir Barton and Lady Allerton were so pleased. We drank your health at dinner. I was here the day the news came. How pleased you must have been; and your parents, and all. But I suppose they are—are rather unhappy about—about your going?"

Barty smiled.

"I had once a brother who went to Ceylon," Lady Evelyn's tone lowered; he looked at her and saw her eyes were glistening. "*He* was glad to go, but for us it was dreadful."

Barty smiled no more.

"I am so sorry for your father and mother," murmured she, softly.

"Thank you. Oh, I—I don't think they mind, you know,"

Barty hastened to reassure her. "There are such a lot of us, don't you know. I'm only one of thirteen. They have twelve left," and in spite of himself a faint bitterness was perceptible in the young man's tone. He was saying aloud what he had often told himself.

Lady Evelyn made no reply.

"Is—what part of Ceylon is your brother in?" inquired Barty, gazing at her with a new hope. What if he should meet the brother? Make friends with the brother? Do the brother a good turn?

"He died there a few months after he went out."

In the silence which followed, the quick, short breathing of each was distinctly audible. They might have known each other all their lives; such a strange invisible bond had sprung up on the instant between them.

Not a word did Barty say. Instead, he let his eyes rest with one long devouring gaze upon the tenderly drooping face before him, and at length lifting her eyes, she met his.

For an instant she felt inclined to turn away; to move to another part of the room; have no more such confidences and such results; but somehow she—did not. She just stood still, and Barty stood beside her.

But womanlike, Evelyn was the first to recover herself. "It was not kind of me to say that," she murmured, gently. "It was very thoughtless, just when you are going out, and have come to say 'Good-by,' and all. I don't know how I *could!* But it all came back to me. He was so delighted about going, too," in broken sentences—"and he was—was so very like you. . . . I thought of him the moment I saw you. . . . Do you mind my saying that? He was my favorite brother; we were just *everything* to each other. Of course I forget him sometimes, but when I think of him"—and the lovely lips trembled and the voice sank away. She held out her hand; neither he nor she quite knew why, but Barty took it, and held it fast.

"Forgive me," she whispered; and the next moment hurriedly burst from him, her eyes full of tears, her veins tingling.

This was the story of the *mauvais quart d'heure* Barty Allerton once passed through, and which left its deeply-engraven traces on all his after life.

When the other people came in, he did not feel fit to talk to them, or to any one. He wanted to be let alone—to think. Mechanically he took up a book, and feigned absorption in it; and luckily the guests who now came trooping in had a great deal to say to each other, and were full of some scheme which had just been started, and about which he as yet knew nothing; so that he was permitted to bury himself ostensibly in his reading, in reality in a delicious dream. The hand which had been so honored slightly trembled.

Lady Evelyn did not reappear till after dinner was announced. By that time Barty had begun to watch for her, and listen for her. His heart gave a great throb as she came in, half-hiding, behind an ample dowager, whose skirts stretched far and wide; and he fancied she kept away from him, and manœuvred to be out of his sight during the long, stately meal.

But what did that signify? Had she not said he was like her brother—her favorite brother—the brother who was “just *everything*” to her?

All through the meal he heard the tender thrill with which the acknowledgment was made; as he gazed blindly in front of him, he saw the drooping eyelids, the flushed cheek, the tremulous lip; and when others laughed and bantered gayly, he never once heard the sound of *her* laugh; and when he now and again could steal a glimpse down the board, he never saw *her* brows lit up with merriment.

Indeed, she was once reproached openly for her pensive mood, and Barty, hearing the charge, caught his breath, but was too far off to note the effect it produced; indeed the glittering repast, to which he had looked forward, and which was to others a gay, mirthful feast, was to him a period of feverish suspense, almost maddening in its lengthy duration.

In the end he had a trifling reward. Lady Evelyn Sauterne, passing by Barty Allerton's chair, dropped her fan, and received it again from his hands, and her low-toned “Thank you” lingered with him and supported him until release came, and he had once more the burning hope of getting near her, looking, listening, gathering up the humblest crumbs of notice that fell his way.

He sprang up as though a chain had snapped when the gentlemen rose to rejoin the ladies after dinner. But oh, cruel disappointment! Lady Evelyn was nowhere visible when he entered the drawing-room. Had she vanished already? Was

he to see her no more that night? Perhaps she was not strong? She had had to rest after her drive in the afternoon, he remembered.

"Mr. Allerton, will you let me show you these photographs? They may interest you as you are going to the East."

A few minutes before Evelyn had excused herself from joining in the round game which was being set on foot, on the plea that she wished to show her collection of Eastern photographs to Mr. Allerton, who was likely to be interested in them.

This had been assented to immediately. "She is always mad about the East, you know," the girls whispered to each other. "Ever since her brother died there."

"Hum, ah!" said Sir Barton, when he came in, "showing poor Ralph's photographs, is she? Poor girl! Barty knows to be careful, does he? He'll not say anything to hurt her feelings?" eying the pair from a distance. "Oh, I should let them alone," in answer to a suggestion from his wife. "They seem getting on all right, and if it's any pleasure to her—I thought she seemed mopish at dinner—it was *that* she was thinking of, no doubt; she has never got over poor Ralph's death. It will do her good to be left to Barty for a bit, as she seems to have taken a fancy to him."

It never occurred to Sir Barton to reflect that there was one to whom such intercourse might not "do good." He and his were rather in awe of Lady Evelyn, a maiden of high degree, with whom a family alliance was desirable, but who was somewhat difficult of management. "A mettlesome filly, a thoroughbred in every fibre!" the old man termed her; and he was wont to caution young and old who had anything to do with Lady Evelyn to beware of "rubbing her up the wrong way."

Eighteen months previously the young girl had endured her first great sorrow, and this was the first occasion on which she had visited North Allerton Manor since; wherefore everything was to be done to soothe and cheer her spirits, and woe betide any unfortunate speaker who, in the opinion of host or hostess, made an ill-timed allusion or flippant jest.

Captain Allerton said the governor was absurd upon the point. Really they could not all be expected to remember that every word beginning with a C might have reference to Ceylon. And as for Evelyn Sauterne, she was a nice enough girl, and pretty, and all that, but he did wish the governor would not make such a confounded fuss about her.

Even when out of Sir Barton's sight, the young man avowed that he felt hot and cold when conversation would turn upon "spicy breezes," and that sort of thing. It had not been his doing that he had driven Lady Evelyn in the phaeton, though he had acquiesced in the arrangement. He admired the young lady; her appearance, her rank, her fortune, were all that he could desire, *ergo*, he meant to "go in" for her, in his own phrase; but he discerned in the sudden and complete prostration of Barty Allerton an excellent means of escape from a certain amount of thralldom.

Evelyn was so young, so serious, so terribly in earnest about everything. It was a bore to have to take life, even for the time being, as she took it.

She would improve; as his wife she would learn that she must do as others did, and feel as they felt; but at present he was as well aware as his father could be that he must bend to the humor of his fair one, not expect her to bend to his. This, we say, was a bore.

Now it would be just the thing if this young cadet, who had obviously been struck all of a heap at first sight, would take Lady Evelyn off his hands every now and then, and leave him free to have his jokes with gayer folks. He wanted to laugh and chaff, and keep everybody in a roar. That was his rôle. It irked him to be forced to moon in a corner, paying his homage to a chit of a girl, who, he half suspected, would as soon have been alone; especially when in the distance he could hear echoes of fun into which he could readily have entered. Several of the girls were much better sport than Evelyn Sauterne; much more amusing companions, easier to get on with; and if he might only relax with them at intervals, he would be ready to pursue his courtship in the main.

Accordingly, Captain Allerton warmly seconded his father's notions on the subject. "As you say, sir, Barty is the very man for her. Poor girl! She can't help it, and it's awfully creditable to her and all that, to be so tender-hearted; but I'm not particularly good at the serious dodge myself. Now, if she gets it all out with Barty, and talks away to him about Ralph's dying, and exhibits his tomb (nice cheerful subject for Barty, ain't it? especially at the present moment), she'll be ready for me when she's in what the poets call the 'lighter vein.'"

"Eh? Oh, yes, of course," assented Sir Barton. "Let her talk to Barty by all means. It won't matter on his account, I

suppose," doubtfully. "There's no time for anything to happen; he sails on Friday week. And, besides, he's too full of himself; oh, let her talk to Barty by all means."

We have no space to dwell on the brief Elysium which ensued. To our poor boy it was divided into two periods, those in which he was in the presence of Lady Evelyn, and those in which he was not. Apart from her he was feverish, restless, filled with a wild tumult of hopes and fears, conscious of only one passionate longing to be again by her side; when there he was held fast as though by a spell, soothed, charmed and pacified, past and future forgotten, living only in the present.

Other people looked placidly on. "Don't you think it is rather a shame?" one would say occasionally. But the answer was nearly sure to be after this fashion: "Pooh! he's but a boy. It's all in the day's work with him. He may as well have his little flirtation, poor fellow, if he enjoys it, considering how soon it will be over. It is only making the days pass."

Making the days pass! Oh, the irony of the phrase if they had but known! The days that were flying, melting, vanishing, as it was! The days that were to be forever beheld in the retrospect as beneath a burning magnifying-glass! The days that found this poor infatuated fool madly pursuing one end and aim, deaf and blind to all besides,—and that left him as mad, as deaf, as blind as before.

By day he moved and walked, rode and drove by Evelyn's side. At night he hung on her skirts, gazed upon her when she sang, claimed her as his partner in the dance.

Captain Allerton laughed and looked on. He had no fear; was not Barty to sail on Friday?

The same reflection quieted his father and contented his mother. They all wished Barty well. It would be something for him to know that the future bride of his cousin was his very good friend, when by-and-by Reggie's marriage should be announced. As for Evelyn? Of course it was only because of the real or fancied resemblance to her lost brother that she permitted the open and obvious worship, the adoration which made every one smile; for although to her no one smiled, or hinted, she could hardly help knowing what they all thought.

The days waned.

"I say, old fellow, you'll go off in a halo of glory," exclaimed Sir Barton's jolly voice. "It's a glorious idea that of yours, taking yourself off in the middle of the ball. Quite romantic, by

Jove! Just when the dancing is at its height, dresses flying, music clashing, hey! presto! begone! and you are seen no more! Away you sail for the East, leaving all of us humdrum folks *in statu quo!* That's what you young fellows like. Going off with a dash and a splash. Puts some spirit into the thing, hey?"

"I hope you will have everything packed before the ball begins, Barty," said Lady Allerton. "You won't mind my saying so, but the truth is, your room will have another occupant after the ball. Major Mansbridge is to sleep here—he is to dress in Reggie's room—and his things will be taken along to yours after you are gone."

"It shall be ready for him, cousin Frances." Lady Allerton's name was Frances.

"You know how glad we should have been to keep you longer, Barty."

"Thank you, I know."

"But as you *have* to go——"

Barty rose up.

"I think, if you *don't* mind—it would simplify matters for the housemaids if you would see to your things being packed *now*," hinted the hostess. "Thomas or William will do the actual work, but young men are particular; you would like to know where each thing is, particularly with a long voyage before you and only one night at home."

His face was turned from her, his eyes were fastened on the door.

"Ah, here you come," exclaimed the speaker gayly, as it opened. "Evelyn, my dear, I want you for a moment. Come with me——"

"No," said a deep, hoarse voice beside her, "come with *me*. Lady Evelyn, *please*, Lady Evelyn—for the last time—come—with me." There was no mistaking the impassioned bitterness of the prayer, the significance of "for the last time."

The girl's face crimsoned. "You want to show me something? Oh, certainly," she murmured as lightly, as she could. "Lady Allerton will, I know, excuse a—a traveller," faintly. "If I can be of any use," but as she spoke a gay party burst in, and even Barty saw that the moment was inauspicious.

"Never mind, never mind," he whispered hurriedly. "It was nothing—particular. It will do—any time." Then in her ear, "Only let me have *some* time—to-night—between the dances——"



before I go. You will, won't you? Just a moment, because it is my last day——" she broke from him and rushed out of the room. Happily the room was nearly dark; no one saw. Yet, afterwards, some alleged that they had felt a curious sensation.

Lady Allerton's ball was the best that had taken place in the neighborhood for years. Not only was it attended by all whom she most desired to welcome, but specially large parties had been assembled for it in the different country seats, and somehow everybody wished to go, and there were no backsliders.

By eleven o'clock dancing was in full swing. The great saloons, the corridors, the galleries and landings were all alive with gayly dressed revelers, and light tread and lighter jest and laughter resounded through the perfumed air. In the eyes of Barty Allerton it was a scene of strange, weird beauty.

He was a good dancer, and had looked eagerly forward to the ball. As Sir Barton said, he had rather pleased himself with the idea of vanishing from the midst of it, when it turned out that he would have to leave by the night train a few hours sooner than was at first supposed,—but now an unutterable heaviness of spirit changed all. Instead of its being merely a joyous frolic to which something of zest was added by his own inner excitement and agitation, it was in his eyes a species of Paradise from which he was about to be ejected. Many and many a time might those around him thus meet in mirth and jollity; but he?—ah, never again would his feet tread a measure in those gay halls, never more would his ears listen to the clash of sweet music from that gallery, never more would his arms encircle that sparkling form!

He danced, knowing not with whom, unless one and one alone were his partner. When compelled to yield her up, he followed her with his eyes, neglecting all besides, till recalled by others to his duty—and even these by-and-by let him alone.

"Don't bully him, poor devil!" Reggie Allerton was heard to mutter. "Let him go hang in peace! I am afraid we have carried this too far, as it is;" for he had caught a vision of a haggard face and white lips, and it had made him momentarily uncomfortable. When Barty came up to claim Lady Evelyn from Captain Allerton's arm, he assented hastily, and glanced with something of apprehension into the other's face. As the pair withdrew, he muttered again to himself, "Poor devil!"

"I ought not to have said all this, but I could not help it."

Far away behind piles of green in the dim conservatory a boy and a girl—they were little more—were sitting. He was holding her hand; she was weeping.

“I am going so soon, and perhaps we shall never meet again; I thought I might just *let you know*—nothing more. I don’t want anything from you. You have been—so kind—to me as it is. Now, good-by.” He bent over her for a moment. Whether she raised her face to his or not he never knew, but it was not turned aside. He had one kiss. All his life long he vowed he would remind himself he had had that one kiss. It satisfied him.

The next day but one an Eastern cadet sailed for Ceylon.

Whether the life which had seemed all rose color to Barty Allerton in the first moment of success and anticipation, would have realized his dreams had nothing intervened, it is not for any one to say. He could not with any precision have ascertained even for himself. He might, he probably would, have enjoyed the voyage out; he might and probably would have taken kindly to the life, especially during the first two years, spent as they were in the society of other young men of his own age, all busily employed in learning the different languages which were to be of use, and when not thus engaged, in pastimes and amusements; he might not even have minded the monotony which followed, when he had been sent off to administer justice in a remote village where lonely days, months, and years glided by almost unrelieved by any variety.

But that one last week in England had changed the aspect of all. As many will understand, it was not so much the reality, as the hot glamor cast over it by the boy’s own excited imagination, which played such havoc with his blood. We know how it had all worked out. We can divine the rest.

In lonely mountain tracks, on long solitary expeditions, in the hush of night, in the first gleams of breaking day, he would see it all again—the last scene oftenest. Often and often he woke with the light waltz tune throbbing in his ears. He saw himself passing down the broad staircase, felt the touch of a hand upon his shoulder—(his cousin Reggie’s, Reggie had volunteered to see him off)—he heard the gay music starting up afresh, and saw the couples pouring in from gallery and corridor. He wondered where Evelyn was. . . .

Again, he was with Evelyn in the faintly glimmering conser-

vatory. He heard the sobbing, and felt the little hand in his drenched with tears. She gave him the flowers she wore (here he would take them from his bosom and press them to his lips), he poured forth his heart, unchecked, undisturbed, and he kissed her wet cheek. . . .

Sometimes he wondered how an overruling Providence could have dealt so cruelly with him as to have let his fresh-won laurels be thus crushed so quickly and unsparingly; for Barty was a religiously brought up young man, and believed in God, after a simple, straightforward fashion. He had thanked God on his knees for his successes on the night which followed the announcement of it; he had desired and still desired to lead a life worthy of a man born to immortality; but in moments of bitterness he would feel that he could have done his duty better had he never met Lady Evelyn Sauterne.

And yet he knew in the depths of his soul that he could not. He had learned—what had he not learned from that one deep draught of pure love? It softened and mellowed every rugged point in his resolute nature; it implanted purer and nobler aspirations within his breast; it pointed to another goal than that of mere worldly success for his ambition; it added years to his youth.

No one in his own home ever knew what made Barty's letters so different from those which it had been expected he would write. Instead of rattling accounts of gayeties, belles, flirtations, or of what was more perhaps in Barty's line, fresh "scores," as the result of indomitable energy and hard work—there was a quiet, matter-of-fact sobriety and an underlying earnestness of tone in the details of his daily life, which sometimes caused the narrative to be voted "slow" by his volatile young brothers and sisters; Barty content with simply doing his duty, and not aiming at brilliancy or distinction, was a new thing.

Those, however, who went to see young Allerton in his novel sphere—he was at a remote station, far away from any city or town, but still he did occasionally have a visitor—those, we say, who now and then looked him up, and partook of his hospitality, were wonderfully charmed with their host, and he made more friends than he had ever done before. He had not been particularly popular in boyhood; he had been too self-engrossed; too keen in pressing forward and upward; too certain that all which was worth the winning in life was to be had, provided fame and fortune were won.

But one and all went away from the solitary little station thinking what a good fellow Barty Allerton was! How awfully kind, and friendly, and unassuming! How anxious to make things pleasant! It was rather rough on him surely to be planted down in such a "beastly hole"!

Yet no one ever heard a complaint of the "beastly hole." Only after a lighthearted traveller had departed, and Barty had seen him off, and watched him riding briskly back to happier hunting-grounds, he would sometimes turn round with a sigh, and think for a moment of the day when he saw his name posted up "First" on the walls of Burlington House.

Five, six, seven years passed.

A friend arrived one day unexpectedly at the station. He had been there not very long before, and had taken a fancy to Barty, and Barty to him; wherefore the solitary resident rejoiced, made a little feast, brightened up his spirits, which were at a low ebb at the moment, and asked for English news.

"I can tell you one piece of English news," observed his friend, looking somewhat keenly at him, "that will put a little color into those thin cheeks of yours, or I am mistaken. I think I'll keep it till after dinner. What have you been doing to yourself? You don't look half as fit as when I was here before—and you were nothing to boast of then."

"Oh—I—I suppose I have run down a bit," said Barty, quietly. "It's the hot weather. And I have been seedy. I shall be all right again by-and-by."

"You won't, if you stop here much longer," said his friend, abruptly.

A faint smile on Barty's part; he had got to stop; what was the use of saying more?

"You don't ask for my news," pursued the speaker. "I must give it without demand, then. Look here, when I was here last you told me about—some one, you know."

Barty nodded. He had. In a moment of great and sore hunger for sympathy he had let his secret be drawn from him.

"It's about her," said his friend, turning round to secure a fresh attitude, and also to face another quarter—not that in which his companion sat. "I am a great chum of a chum of hers—fact is, I'm going to be married to a girl you never heard of, but who is the bosom friend of Lady Evelyn Sauterne. What do you think this girl of mine said to me the other day? She said, 'Go and fetch Barty Allerton home.

'Tell him to pack up his traps and tramp for England.' D'ye take me."

"N—no," faintly.

"Not? I'll put it plainer, then. The Allertons at home can't make anything of that job you wot of. Evelyn Sauterne is her own mistress now, and can do as she pleases, and marry whom she chooses; and she won't have Reggie at any price; says he's a drivelling idiot—or as good as says it. Says there's only one man of the Allerton family she—well, you can guess the rest. You know pretty much who the 'one man' is; and you can divine what that man had better do. . . . Eh?" looking round. "*Eh? Oh, I say!* Poor fellow! This comes of living alone, you know. I told you you had better go home. And the long and the short of it is I am come to take you. I am not going to let you out of my sight till I see you on the shores of Old England. Couldn't face Muriel if I did. She gave me the tip, and I tell you she got it straight from headquarters. My orders were to find you out, and if you were still of the same mind in regard to Lady Evelyn as when you came out—and, of course, I knew you were, for hadn't you told me?—I was to take you by the shoulder and say, 'Right about face; home by the next steamer!' So now, old chap, pull yourself together; do—there's a good chap! And if we haven't two weddings this spring——"

And they had.

And Barty began to grow young again; and his life was once more all flooded with sunshine; but in the depths of his humble, happy heart he never grudged the experience which he was wont to think had taught him all he ever knew.



## THE FIG-TREES OF OLD JOURDÉ \*

BY EARLE TRACY



WINDING inland, Bayou Marie opens a sunlit vista between dark live-oaks and pine-trees. It passes the deserted Old House Point and Tiblier's gloomy place, where brown nets are always in sight, stretched on the long pier to dry in the sunshine.

It passes Antoine Manuel's quaint old house and his tiny shipyard. Manuel's green knoll commands the curving stream in all directions, and among his boats at anchor drift the fallen blooms of pink azaleas. They begin to grow just beyond the orange grove of An-

toine *fits*, so called to distinguish him from his father, the ship-builder. The young man's wife is Madame Antoine *fits*, and his mother is simply Madame Antoine; for farther up the bayou Madame Manuel, the grandmother, lives in widowed solitude.

Past all these warm-hearted, simple-minded creole folk the Marie lures on, through warm, bright silence and the spicy scent of myrtle and bay-trees in the woods. Too shallow for schooner traffic, and too narrow, sometimes, even for a skiff to turn in, it ripples between dun marshes or flowery, vine-draped banks where the air is sweet with grape-blossom and the golden bells of jasmine.

Green trout dart through clear, shimmering reaches from one pool of shadow to another, and sometimes the call of a bird breaks through a quiet that is more full of gladness and life than the atmosphere of deeper-channeled, more frequented streams.

There, in the bright sunlight and the utter loneliness, the fishermen who paddle up the bayou in their pirogues, casting for

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green trout, know of a rude shanty, built creole fashion, with the beaten earth for a floor, and a low-pitched roof running out beyond the walls to shelter a gallery in front. With its ever-fresh whitewash and paint it looks new still, but it stands in the shadow of gnarled, wide-spreading fig-trees that tell a story of the many years since old Jourdé came to build and to plant in seclusion, beyond even old Madame Manuel's place.

He is well liked, this Jourdé, although he is no talker, and prefers spending his days alone at his little hermitage, rather than among his neighbors; and the creoles, who have no taste for prying, leave him to himself, content with their own simple conclusions.

"De ole Jourdé ees a good man, bud 'e ees not sociab'," Manuel will explain, as he fills the pipe of good-fellowship, "'e ees not sociab'."



One summer day, when the shadows had stolen half across the narrow Marie—it had been a very good day for fish—a white-faced stranger left his pirogue at Jourdé's little landing and walked quickly up the path that old Jourdé had worn to his house under the fig-trees. The stranger knocked at the open door; waited, and knocked again; looked in, and then came away with a groan to seat himself on a weather-worn bench beneath one of the trees. He held one hand in the other, and turned a pain-drawn face to watch for some moving figure on the merry, deserted bayou.

It was Jourdé's favorite fig-tree under which his visitor sat waiting,—a fantastic old tree which had been blown over once in a storm, so that its trunk stretched horizontally above the ground, supported by part of its roots and part of its branches. Good Jourdé, who loved an experiment almost better than a tree, had heaped earth upon the tips of these branches, so that they had taken root and grown, giving the old tree three or four new trunks, on which it flourished like a banyan, though half of its

original roots still stretched upward, dry and useless, while its branches sought the sunlight at every angle impossible to the nature of fig-trees.

At last a boat came in sight on the bayou. Old Jourdé was returning.

Little as Jourdé went abroad, he was known at sight anywhere on Bayou Marie, Pontomoc Bay or Bayou Porto, up which he went once a week to the village of Pontomoc after his mail. Old Jourdé neither paddled like the men in pirogues, nor rowed like the ordinary men in skiffs. Wherever he went, he stood half upright, facing the bow of his short, broad boat, that seemed to be modeled after Jourdé himself, and, with his two oars held



securely in the tholes, pushed on them instead of pulling, surveying his way carefully in advance. Jourdé had made a mistake early in life—since then he had preferred to see his way.

The stranger's heart sank at sight of the person that walked up from the landing. A quaint, squat figure was old Jourdé, like a sturdy toadstool under his great broad hat. His bare feet padded firmly along the hard path as if they had no thought or longing for shoes; his faded trousers were turned up over well-bronzed shins; and outside of the trousers hung his red flannel shirt, in the free, cool fashion of the poorer creoles on the coast.

But when Jourdé came nearer, looking with surprise at his visitor, there was something reassuring in his pudgy, sunburned



face, though, from under his lightly penciled brows, his eyes looked strangely, half wanderingly. They had seen that early mistake.

“ Dr. Jourdé ? ”

The bare-footed man bowed and lifted his hat with a politeness somewhat less graceful and more ornate than the ordinary courtliness to be found among the primitive fishermen.

“ My name ees Jourdé,” he said. If he had been speaking to a creole, his measured accents would have been in perfect French. As it was, his English was the most correct at his command. His neighbors spoke to him in their easy creole patois, almost as provincial as their English; but although for comfort and economy he conformed to the common costume, there was a clinging punctiliousness about him that showed in his avoidance of the common speech.

“ But you are a doctor ? ” continued the stranger, on whose face Jourdé’s eye had at once read physical suffering. “ At least the women in the house down below here told me you understood medicine and had instruments, and I want you——”

“ Did zey not tell, also, zat my knife and my medicine zey are all for ze dumb animals ? ” Jourdé interrupted, gravely.

“ What do I care for that, man ? ” the stranger retorted, nervously. “ Look here, it’s only a little thing. I’ve caught this fishhook in my thumb and I can’t get it out. You can do it well enough; it don’t require any skill if you have a sharp knife, but it hurts unbearably; I can’t paddle back to the village with it, and the men in the houses below here are all off shrimping. I could do it myself if it was my left thumb——” the man spoke almost savagely, for Jourdé’s face was still impassive. “ I tell you, no skill is needed.”

Jourdé smiled oddly. “ Eet geeves me much pain to see you so suffering,” he said. “ Then attend. I cannot undertake your oper-acion, but I weell fasten your boat behin’ that of me, and weell take you to ze village——”

“ Do you think I’ll stand this while you tow me three miles ? Where’s your knife ? You’ve dilly-dallied enough; I can hack it out with my left hand.”

Jourdé stood silent a moment; then he said, “ Eet ees not so easy a work, zis ’acking out; but as you say, eet ees a small sing. Sit zere one moment, I weel get my eenstrument and rremove ze ’ook.”

The reluctant practitioner opened the only closed door in his

cabin, and went into a little room, shelved from floor to ceiling, and crowded with books, magazines, pamphlets and jars of many sorts and sizes. There was one window, and by it a table, on which stood a simple apparatus, suggestive of chemistry, and a highly-finished wooden case. Jourdé walked straight to the case



and opened it. There was a little nick in the cover. He drew back, steadying himself by the table. His eyes saw something that did not belong to the little cabin on the Marie.

It is an operating-table in a city hospital. The room is small and old-fashioned; the students crowd each other eagerly, watching Jourdé's skillful hands. The struggling of the patient makes it almost impossible to work, and the moment is critical. The assistant has already demurred at using more chloroform, but Jourdé orders it. In an instant the assistant tells him it is too much. He drops his instruments; the assistant removes the chloroform mask. They lower the head of the table, and fight desperately with every help to resuscitation. Some student picks up an instrument and nervously hacks, hacks, hacks, upon the case. The assistant glances from the patient's sunken, pulseless temple to Jourdé, fiercely applying his restoratives. The faces of the crowding students are tense. Jourdé looks up, meeting the assistant's eyes. They both stand erect. Some one whispers:

"My God!"

Jourdé hears his own calm words. "This possibility is always to be faced. In a case like this, when he has to choose between evils, the operator is——"

A regardless voice murmurs, "Between devil and deep sea," but the set faces of the other students do not relax. Jourdé has a few more words for them. They disperse quietly.

"I can't stand this. I tell you, if you're afraid, give me the knife." The stranger was at the laboratory door.

"Een one meenute, monsieur," Jourdé answered, starting slightly. "I am wiz you immediately. But you mus' pr-repare; much pain ees possib'."

“ Not much more than I have already, I reckon,” the stranger replied. But Jourdé shook his head as he selected one of the glistening knives. Through all these years, while his old associates had been wondering about him, missing him, and finally forgetting him, Jourdé had been guarding his instruments from the approach of rust and tarnish. They were ready for any sick or injured brute, but a human patient he had never touched.

Jourdé’s lips showed white in the ruddy sunburn of his face as he came into the glowing outer world ; but the wounded hand was grasped firmly and there was no trembling of the sharp knife as it began its work. The stranger watched him disdainfully at first, with an assumption of bearing the operation carelessly. But as pain grew into keen torture and the surgeon’s face became intent and eager over his task, the patient saw that his contempt had been unjust ; and it took all the remembrance of it to close his lips and hold his arm unshrinking. At last, in an excruciating moment, he gave his hand a jerk, only to feel the pitiless clasp tighten on it.

“ I don’t believe I can stand it, doctor,” he protested. “ Don’t you have something here that would stop the pain ? ”

Jourdé smiled slightly over his knife.

“ I’ve got to have something ! ” the man insisted, sharply.

“ Patience ! ” cried Jourdé. “ Ze dumb beast show more reason. Pardon, I do know ze pain, but it will soon be done.”

A few moments later Jourdé was carefully bandaging the thumb. Now that the suffering and the strain were ended, each man felt that he owed the other some amends. Jourdé’s mind was on some Scuppernong wine in the cabin ; he went after it presently. The stranger fell to praising the great fig-trees that shadowed them.

“ They thrive so finely here, I should think you would plant an orchard,” he suggested.

Old Jourdé shrugged his square shoulders.

“ Eet ’as been try,” he said.

“ Isn’t there any market ? ”

“ Ze canning factory, yes.”

“ Then why don’t you plant them ? ”

“ Monsieur,” said Jourdé, “ zere are some strange sings. One ees about ze feeg-trees.”

“ I don’t understand,” said the stranger.

“ No, I do not understand eet myself, but people notice eet. Ze feeg-tree grow bes’—well—near w’ere somebody live. And

w'y? I do not know. Ze creole people say zay mus' feel ze breas of zeir master each morning,—but zat ees not true, eet cannot be."

"Must feel their master's breath!" echoed the stranger. "What difference can that make, if they receive the same care somewhere else?"

"Oh, eet is only supersteecion. Eet cannot be true. I am creole, too, but I know zat cannot be true; eet is too unreason-aabl'. Yet zay do grow bes' near ze 'ouse; zere mus' be ozer cause."

"I should say so," agreed the more fervent sceptic, rising to take his leave. "Can't grow without feeling their master's breath! Why don't you ask how it would be if the trees had a bad master, wouldn't his breath wither them?"

"Yes, I have t'ought of zat. I know not w'at ze supersteecion ees."

The two men shook hands and parted.

Jourdé did not know, but he had often thought about it, and it comforted him that his trees had always flourished.

Jourdé was absorbed in the little laboratory where he spent almost all his time of late, when Antoine *fils* dropped in. It was not often that his neighbors dropped in on Jourdé, so that a call

generally meant the indisposition of neighboring live-stock, or some important village news. But Antoine *fils* had a sorrowful tale to tell.

"A very pleasant day, Monsieur Antoine," said Jourdé, with his studied courtesy.

"Eet ees a little warm," replied Antoine, wiping his bronzed forehead, "a little warm on de bayou. I have been to my gran'moder, below here, and I say to myself, I say,—we will go on to see Monsieur Jourdé an' see w'at he think about Tiblier."

"Let me give you a little refreshment," said Jourdé, already on his way to the cupboard. "A glass of my good Scuppernong; it has been ripening since '79. There is no better made on all the coast. But what is it about Tiblier?"

"You have not hear de news 'bout Tiblier, François Tiblier, that is near dead down at de Point?"



"Near dead!" exclaimed Jourdé, stopping with his wine near the middle of the room. "But I saw him only—when was it?—Not long ago. What is the matter?"

"Fever—*fièvre typhoïde*, de Docteur Weellis say. He come from de village every day to see François. He give Madame François ver' little hope."

Old Jourdé filled two wine-glasses in silence; then, presenting one to Antoine: "Your good health, monsieur, and the recovery of our friend Tiblier!"

"And your prosperity, Monsieur Jourdé," added Antoine. "Ah, monsieur, dis wine is excellen'."

Jourdé acknowledged the praise absent-mindedly.

"How long has the fever been running?" he questioned, abruptly.

Antoine lowered his glass. "Pret' near on t'ree week now, I reckon. It come on him soon after he come from shrimp-fishin'. It is not so healt'y where he live, down at de Point; I tole my fader dat it is not healt'y at de Tiblier place, but he say de Tiblier family has been well as any of us. He t'ink dat Docteur Weellis ain't givin' François de right treatmen'."

"Hey?" cried Jourdé, eagerly. "How is Dr. Willis treating him?"

"Well, if it is like w'at dey all say, I doan' t'ink, me, dat de docteur is treatin' François at all. He say to Madame François, he say, 'Give him nosing to eat;' at least, dat is all I can hear dat he do for him; an' my fader, he say dat Docteur Weellis is starving François to deat',—dat w'at he say. De docteur say dat de fever, w'en it doan' get no nourishmen', goin' wear itself out, but my fader has seen François—he wen' to see him las' evenin'—and w'at he say is dat de fever is nourishin' itself on François, an' it is François dat will wear out de firs'. Oh, it is hard not to mek mistek in dose fever!"

It was hard not to make mistakes. But the thought of young Tiblier, overcome by exposure and scantier fare than that usual to creole frugality, pitted against the relentless malarial fever,—Jourdé could have shaken Willis with one vigorous, plump arm. He had great forbearance with youth, had Jourdé, but not with youth that clung to theories which he himself had abandoned twenty years ago. He knew François—a brave lad—it was a pity that the inexperienced, fogyish Willis must learn at his expense. Ah, well, it was a great pity; François had a little family to leave. Jourdé roused himself. Too true a physician at heart

openly to criticise a confrère, he still dared give Antoine little hope.

"I am sure that Dr. Willis will do everything he can," he said, earnestly. "He is conscientious, there is no doubt; he will do the best he knows."

"Yes, he say dat himself," replied Antoine, doubtfully, as he rose to take his leave, "an' me, too, I t'ink dat he means well. But it is little matter w'at you mean if you are making mistek. Madame Fontaine, she is sure dat de docteur is right; she is satisfy, dat is one good t'ing. But I wish, me, dat we had some oder docteur at Pontomoc."

Jourdé accompanied Antoine *fils* to the landing, where they lingered a little to discuss the best treatment for certain ailing poultry, and kindred items; for Jourdé's neighbors had learned to depend on his advice and surgical skill. But when the flash of Antoine's noiseless paddle had disappeared down the bayou, Jourdé hastened back to his little laboratory and buried himself in his books.

He did a great deal of thinking as the days went on, and read his medical journals more closely than ever. They were the only links he allowed himself with the profession he loved. Through them he followed all the discoveries, all the new lines of treatment that he could never test, espousing this theory, condemning that, with all the passionate vehemence in which a disabled veteran, watching the battle, exults or fumes at the movements of those in command.

The news of François grew more discouraging to all his friends, and it did not surprise Jourdé to learn about ten days later, that young Tiblier had succumbed.

"He should have had nourishment," murmured Jourdé, in the laboratory on his return from François' funeral. "A diet of milk, sponging;—he could have been saved, yes, he could have been saved."

Old Jourdé's changed habits began to make their impression. The rich sunburn faded from his good, chubby face, and he almost forgot his garden, with its grape-vines and its fig-trees. True, he still sat out on the old bench to smoke his twilight pipe, but his mind was back with his old comrades in the old New Orleans haunts.

It was while he was sitting there one evening, letting his pipe die out in his hand, that Antoine *fils* came running up to him in breathless haste.

"You mus' come," he panted, forgetting even to bare his head. "My moder is ver' sick. I come here for dere is no time to go for de docteur. Come!"

Jourdé sprang to his feet. "What is it?" he asked.

"Oh, I doan know," cried Antoine, wringing his hands. "My fader is wid her, an' they sen' me here. She is ver' sick—de chill, Adèle, my wife, say; she is try to make her warm. Her hands are all blue, an' her face look!—oh, her face it look like dead. Come, monsieur, come quick!"

But Jourdé had sat down again. Antoine did not notice that his voice was dry and hoarse.

"Go for your doctor," he heard Jourdé say. "Go at once, you may not be too late. I—I cannot come. I am out of practice."

"You will not come," gasped Antoine, scarcely comprehending what Jourdé said. "Not come—*oh mon dieu!*"

"Go!" cried Jourdé, fiercely. "Hurry man, do you hear! The tide will be with you to the village. You will be in time."

"Me an' my fader doan' like de way he tek care of François," Antoine objected, still hesitating. "We t'ink——"

"Go!" shouted Jourdé, stamping his foot. "Be quick, if you don't want to be too late! Go!" and Antoine, overawed, obeyed.

"He'll be cramming ice down her throat; I know him," thought Jourdé, bitterly, when Antoine was gone. "Crushed ice, the idiot, with the chill already on. Bathing her in alcohol"—he shuddered—"thank heaven, he'll probably be too late. Poor Antoine, he takes it very hard,—poor boy." Jourdé jumped up and went into his laboratory.

Did he forget that he was "out of practice"? Then why did he repeat, "It would be murder; another murder; this is duty—a duty from God himself," as if he felt the need of reassurance, all the way to Madame Manuel's bedside? For Jourdé's pipe lay forgotten on the bench under the fig-



tree that night, pearly with the heavy summer dew. Jourdé was at Manuel's, fighting with hot drinks and stimulants against a congestive chill. When Antoine *fi*ls returned with Dr. Willis, Jourdé had been before him two good hours.

A new sign appeared in the village, bearing the legend, "Hip-

polYTE Jourdé, M. D., Physician and Surgeon." It caused a great stir among the townspeople, coming as it did, a few days after the news of Madame Manuel's recovery. This cure was considered little less than miraculous by a community accustomed to seeing disease baffle such medical skill as could afford to bury itself so far from the centres of science. From the day that he opened his office, Dr. Jourdé's hands were full.

And Jourdé was happy. The curious expression of self-distrust had vanished from his eyes, and in its stead there shone a burning eagerness, as if he would make up in a day all that he had lost during his self-imposed exile. His dress, too, was transformed, and the only garment which this trim doctor inherited from "old Jourdé" was the broad-brimmed hat.

Stories of his former achievements began to be known, and many guesses were made at the mystery of his long retirement, but as they never came from anyone who knew, they bore little truth and less authenticity.

Toward the end of August, the principal hotel-keeper of Pontomoc set a large force of men at work to strengthen the breakwater, in anticipation of the annual storm. The heat was intense, and the work lagged, until a rising tide frightened the men and they fell to for the best that was in them. The hotel stood quite on the gulf, and was protected from wash of the tide only by its breakwater.

It came to be a dangerous occupation, this strengthening the breakwater; for the first row of loosened piles gave and crunched against the second with every wave. It had been the intention of the hotel manager to drive an outer row of posts, but this was scarcely begun when the men were forced to give up and hastily lash the rest together with chains. It was in this task that Emil Georget almost lost his life. Between the waves, he had been



working among the others with ropes and chains and spars, but one wave came for which Emil was not prepared. The rest of the men sprang away; he stood, suddenly caught by the arm,



between the straining piles. It was only for a moment; the wave fell back and left him freed, stretched out on the beach as he had fallen, but his arm was a hopeless mass.

There was an immediate summons for Dr. Jourdé, but he was out, and Dr. Willis was taken down to the sufferer at once.

"I have no instruments for this," he said, when he saw the condition of Georget's arm. "We will have to wait for Dr. Jourdé, but I can make him comfortable until then."

Emil had been laid on the side-gallery of the hotel and young Willis was bending over him as Jourdé came up, carrying his instruments.

"He suffered so that I've just given him morphine," Willis explained, nervously.

"You eenjected eet?"

"In the arm."

Jourdé's eyes nailed the younger man.

"Ze eenjured arm?" he asked, sharply.

"Of course, where it was need——." Something in Jourdé's face closed the sentence.

Emil's voice rose entreatingly. Jourdé went over to him and made a careful examination, in spite of the sufferer's protests that he wanted to be put out of his misery.

"'E promise 'e will help me," Emil groaned, seeking out Willis with his eyes, "but de t'ings 'e do oan' do no good—oh, I can' stan' dis, me,— I can', I can'."

"Be brave, man," Jourdé cried, peremptorily, in French. "Have courage, nothing can help you unless you first help yourself. Make up your mind to go through this without anything. You see that the things don't help you. Come, man, be brave."

There was something magnetic in this quaint, plump doctor when he roused himself. Emil said: "Monsieur know bes'."

But Jourdé felt like a craven. He knew that "the things" if properly applied would bring relief; and he made his simple preparations in the haste of a man who doubts himself. Willis helped him with angry deftness. To his eyes, this old surgeon was a brute.

As they bound the unresisting patient to the improvised operating table, Jourdé felt that he could now do his part without flinching, but at the last moment he could not restrain a glance into Emil's face.

"We will use ze anæstetic," he said, quietly, and the operation was delayed while he arranged the appliances.

Through all the strained apprehension of the next fifteen minutes the old doctor felt an exultant thrill to see that his hands had not forgotten their craft.

The operation went well. It was pauseless work, and when it was done young Willis drew a long breath. He raised his eyes to find the older man still watching. It was not till Emil's eyelids trembled open for a moment that Jourdé answered Willis's glance with inexpressible relief and joy. Then his face changed. Something beyond Willis held his eyes, and the younger man can never forget the look. He hurried to Jourdé, and, putting a firm arm round him, drew him into a chair.

"Eet—ees—notting," Jourdé said, in the monotonous tones of one who wrestles with unconsciousness.

"Eet—weell—pass," he murmured, weakly pushing away the restoratives that Willis pressed upon him. "I—tell—you"—Jourdé's thought was impatient, but his voice flatted in spite of him—"let—me—be."

Willis "let him be." There was room for much pity in this young practitioner's heart, much appreciation of a pain that he saw and did not ask to understand. It was with no feeling of rebuff that he turned to devote his attention to Georget, who was coming to himself in queer waste places, and felt grateful for a clasping hand.

In that moment Jourdé's impatient aversion for Willis gave way to a conviction that the blundering, undeveloped young fellow had possibilities of growth, and was made of hardier stuff than he himself.

The unceasing vigilance with which Jourdé watched over Emil's convalescence caused no little dissatisfaction among his other patients, who found themselves suddenly turned over to young Willis's tender mercies. But when Emil's case had been discharged, they were more impressed to hear that Dr. Jourdé's sign had disappeared.

The evening that he dismissed Emil, Jourdé, in frock-coat and patent-leathers, entered his little hermitage on Bayou Marie. Ten minutes later, in scarlet shirt and bare-footed, he emerged, pruning-shears in hand.

The August storm had worked havoc with his fig-trees, and Jourdé went among them contritely, trimming off broken twigs, and bandaging with long strips of sail-cloth the limbs that had been shattered by the wind.

It was here that Willis generally found him, for the younger

man fell into a habit of coming to confer with Jourdé, and the old bench under the trees was the scene of many animated discussions, and many discourses in Jourdé's quaint English.

"Always at those trees," laughed Willis, coming up the little path from the landing, one afternoon.

Jourdé, perched in the croft of a stumpy tree, answered not a word until Willis stood just beneath him, then he said :

"Weell you support zees leem' one minute, eef you please, docteur—"

"Got to come off, has it," said Willis, reaching up and bracing a strong hand against the limb.

He was often called upo to assist at some such piece of surgery, and while Jourdé worked Willis would consult with him in regard to special patients in the neighborhood. He did this now, talking above the muffled squealing of old Jourdé's fine-tooth saw, while Jourdé nodded or frowned over his sawing as he listened. The tree dismembered of that limb, he allowed his little round figure to drop limply to earth, and repaired with Willis to his well-loved bench.

"Zey are eemproving," said Jourdé, looking fondly at the trees.

"They begin to feel your breath again," replied Willis, smiling. He had come to take an indulgent interest in Jourdé's fig-trees.

"Ah, you know eet, zen," cried the old man,—adding hastily,—"eet ees a supersteecion, zat ees all. Eet ees not true, it cannot be. Eet is too unreasonaable."

"I suppose it would be hard to prove," Willis admitted, "but I can't help liking it."

"As for proove, zere ees plenty of zat. Plenty of cases zat might be considered proove. For one, you never see ze feeg-tree leeving at a deserted 'ouse. Oh, zere ees much proove, but eet ees too unreasonaable. Zere mus' be some ozer cause."

Willis would have continued the argument, but old Jourdé turned the conversation to the subject on which Willis had come to confer, and the young physician soon forgot the fig-trees and the quaint superstition that clung to them.

It was sunset when Willis untied his pirogue and turned his face down the shimmering Marie, in its golden evening mist.

"Ah, well," sighed Jourdé, as he watched the rise and fall of the glistening paddle, "at least I have courage to be surgeon to

my trees. There is other life besides the human. Why should I seek responsibilities that are too great?"

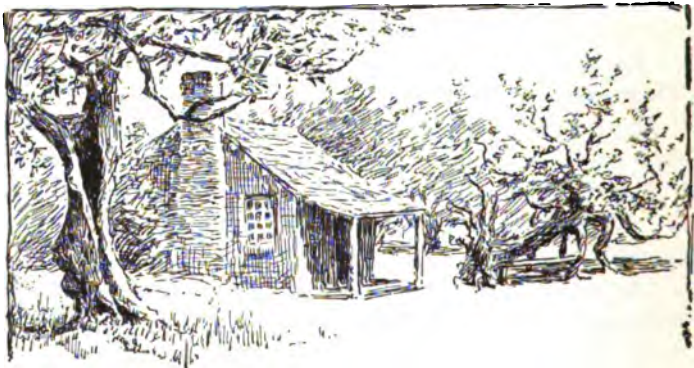
He turned back along the darkening path.

As his eyes fell on his gray-limbed, shadowy patients, his good face cleared.

"It is strange," he murmured, plucking a last sear leaf from the many-trunked patriarch. "It is very strange—they were withering without me."

He shook his head.

"It is not true ; it cannot be ; but it *is*."



## THE INTERMEDIARY \*

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AFTER all, I'm not surprised," said the Duchess, with an expressive glance at Captain Ives, her companion in the billiard-room at Appleford. "His father—well, of course, I needn't tell you, young men know everything nowadays;—but it is easy to see that poor Noel's weakness is hereditary; and I must say," she added, abruptly, restoring the chalk to its receptacle under the table with a little jerk, "his taste is certainly better than his father's. At least this girl is not a creature who dresses in,—who appears in burlesques. But I dare say she will when she gets a chance."

While the Duchess of Cidershire achieved a small break, playing with an absence of judgment which in itself betrayed her state of mind, her cousin (the kinship existed, although he was considerably her junior and the degree remote) permitted himself a little inward laughter at the lady's discreetly indiscreet allusion to her husband's escapades. He had so often wondered how much the Duchess knew of the Duke's youthful vagaries, which even now had hardly ceased to form topics for vagrant discussion in boudoirs and smoking-rooms. If there was anything in heredity certainly Lord Noel Ciderton's infatuation for Sylvia Faunthorpe, the charming *ingénue* of the Imperial Theatre, was quite adequately accounted for; but his friends, and especially his parents, were none the less disposed to view the case with the keenest disapproval. The fact that Miss Faunthorpe (no one ever called her Mrs. Hibbard, even before her divorce) had acquired a certain celebrity (some people might have said notoriety) did not improve matters; the Duchess, in particular, complained that an *ingénue* had no business to be celebrated; it involved somehow a contradiction in terms. And, as regards the paternal precedent, it was true that the Duke had shown himself on more than one occasion a remarkably easy victim, but his liberality had never extended so far as a serious offer of marriage to an actress. He would cheerfully have shared his fortune with any ornament of the stage who had won his admi-

\* A selection from "Macmillan's Magazine."

ration, but he was more scrupulous when it came to choosing a partner in the bearing of his title. It was hard on Lord Noel, Captain Ives reflected, that his more honorable intentions should aggravate the enormity of his aberration; but after all one could sympathize with his family, especially if (and this was the Captain's enviable position) one was engaged to marry Lady Hilda, Lord Noel's twin sister, a girl with a long neck and a fine air, who could talk for hours about politics, and phagocytes, and knew thirteen variations of the barn-dance.

The Duke had called his son a fool—a peculiarly qualified fool, expressing himself with more ardor than elegance; and Lord Noel, after receiving from his mother, in somewhat politer language, an assurance that her estimate of his conduct was practically identical with that of his other parent, had packed his portmanteau, turned his back on the pheasants which were waiting in the coverts to be shot, and retreated to town. The position was therefore desperate, and Captain Ives, deftly accomplishing a difficult cannon, could not wonder that his opponent's nerve was shaken. In spite of her curious passion for the pastime (she had taken it up originally because the billiard-room was the nicest room in the house, and the game afforded such opportunities for the display of a pretty hand and wrist, which had never deserved the epithet better than now, although she was frankly middle-aged)—in spite of her enthusiasm, and the fact that the red ball lay blushing in a coyly inviting position over the right-hand middle pocket, the Duchess paused abstractedly when it was her turn to play.

"Then you will make one more effort?" she said, half apologetically, glancing across the table at Ives. "You will go up to town to-morrow, and remonstrate with that wretched boy? There is no time to be lost—he talked of marrying her at once! And—and don't you think you might see the creature?"

Captain Ives raised his eyebrows. "Of course I will do anything I can. I will see Noel, though I can't say I think it will be of much use. But——"

"But?" echoed the Duchess, as he paused. "Are you afraid of the actress?"

Captain Ives laughed uneasily, brushing a chalk mark off the sleeve of his coat. "Well, what on earth could I say to her? You don't want me to ask her to let him off?"

"Oh," said the Duchess, hopelessly, "tell her that I'm a perfect fiend,—that I should lead her a life: that Noel hasn't any

money,—he hasn't much, you know. Tell her that—that she wouldn't be received."

"Much she would mind that!" commented the Captain, candidly. "I don't suppose she expects it. And, you know, she isn't really such a bad sort; she's very pretty, and I've never heard much against her."

"I like your 'much'! Hasn't she been divorced?"

"Yes, on her own petition."

"Oh, well," cried the Duchess, "I've no doubt she's an angel,—for a mountebank! But as Lady Noel Ciderton, as my daughter-in-law! Ugh! I should like to shake them both."

She made a vicious stroke, driving the red ball against the shoulder of the cushion instead of into the pocket, and left an easy cannon for her opponent, who finished the game with a brilliant break of seventeen. Just then the dressing-gong sounded, but the Duchess did not immediately obey its resonant summons. She watched Captain Ives while he replaced the cues and rests in the rack and lowered the lights; then, under cover, as it seemed to her companion, of the comparative darkness, she returned to the attack.

"Tell me, Philip," she asked, softly; "is she really very pretty?"

"Haven't you seen her?" replied the other, with a glance faintly indicative of surprise.

"Oh, I suppose so,—on the stage. But any one can look pretty,—in paint and things, on the stage."

"Well, I haven't met her in private life," said the Captain, impartially. "But I'm told that she's uncommonly pretty and extremely amusing. Tells awfully good stories, I believe. In fact, I've heard some of them."

"Yes," said the Duchess, dryly, "no doubt!" After a pause she continued. "Then you might—perhaps you wouldn't mind——"

"Wouldn't mind?" echoed Ives.

"Well, if she's so pretty, and entertaining, and all that, perhaps you could make love to her without boring yourself very much?"

"My dear Duchess! Forgive me if I don't quite follow you. Do you really mean to suggest——? And what about Hilda?"

The lady gave a little start. "Gracious, I had forgotten Hilda! No, I didn't mean to suggest anything; I was talking nonsense. Bother! Well, anyhow you will talk to Noel? I know he looks

up to you, and, as my eldest son is in Canada, who else is there? Young men will generally listen to a friend, even if they won't obey their parents,—especially if the friend has the reputation of being one of the safest and cleverest men in his regiment.”

This compliment was delivered with a smile which illuminated the charming little lady's perplexity like a ripple passing over a woodland pool; and Captain Ives was immediately impelled to promise that he would do his very utmost to reclaim the wanderer.

He was not sorry to effect his escape from Appleford next morning. The atmosphere of the place was somewhat too heavily laden for comfort; and his betrothed, the Lady Hilda, wore an air which rendered her society a little depressing even for a lover who did not make too great demands, whose attitude was one of complacent rather than of rapturous satisfaction. But if he was able to glance back at the stately gates of the ducal deer-park with equanimity, and even with a feeling of relief, Captain Ives was less able to congratulate himself upon the prospect of the business which menaced the other end of his journey. His companion in the smoking compartment of the express train, observing the young man's puckered brow and neglected cigar, concluded that he had been crossed in love, or had dropped a small fortune over the Cesarewitch—an inference which, in the face of the eminently successful issue of the Captain's wooing, and the fact that the seasonable demise of an elderly aunt had recently made him master of an income running well into four figures, presented a striking example of the folly which jumps to conclusions.

At the end of half an hour Captain Ives gave utterance to a sigh, which if it had been more audible might have expressed a mild phase of despair, carefully filled and lighted a pipe, and buried himself in the perusal of his newspaper, his lean, sunburnt face resuming meanwhile the good-natured expression which seemed to harmonize so well with his fair mustache and hair, his straight nose, and his kind, shrewd, gray eyes. When he had conscientiously exhausted the pages of his journal, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, refilled that companion of his solitude, and abandoned himself to dreamy meditation, wondering what the deuce Letty (it pleased his simple mind to refer to the Duchess thus familiarly)—what the deuce she meant by suggesting that he should make love to Miss Faunthorpe.

Entering Lord Noel Ciderton's chambers soon after mid-day,



he found that perversely amorous young gentleman (whose smooth, pink cheeks and somewhat ugly boyish features showed no trace of the recent conflict with parental authority) engaged in the leisurely discussion of an apparently early luncheon, which was in fact his breakfast in disguise. "Sit down, old man," said Lord Noel, hospitably. "I thought you were at Appleford. Have they chucked you out too? What have *you* done?"

Captain Ives smiled uneasily, murmuring a reply which struck him as diplomatic, that he had been obliged to come up to town on business. "By the way, you're a precious young ass!" he added solemnly when the servant had left the room.

"Oh, shut up, Ivy!" rejoined the other happily. "I've heard all that before. The governor said I was a damned fool. I don't care; I know what I'm doing. Have some caviare?"

Captain Ives shrugged his shoulders, and helped himself to another piece of toast.

"You,—you don't really think I'm an ass, do you?" his host inquired presently in a slightly less rebellious tone. "You've been got at, haven't you, Ivy?"

"I do, straight! I think you're an everlasting young idiot."

"But why?"

"Oh, well, there are heaps of reasons. Er—people don't do these things."

"Oh, people!" put in the other scornfully. "That's all skittles! People are fools; I'm not people; and it isn't even true,—it's done every day! I tell you what; you'd do exactly the same thing if you were in my shoes, and you can't deny it."

Captain Ives smiled loftily. "I think not. I can't quite imagine the case. You see, I've never made a fool of myself with an actress."

"Well, I have," admitted Lord Noel, frankly. "And I like her all the better for being an actress. Not that I wouldn't marry her, even if she was only an ordinary woman; I shouldn't care what she was."

"Does she,—er,—like you?" asked the other abruptly.

Lord Noel glanced at him suspiciously, blushing and frowning a little. "Oh, I think so. She says she does, pretty well; and anyway, isn't she going to marry me as soon——?"

"As soon as what?"

"As soon as her decree what's-his-name has been made absolute. She certainly isn't marrying me for my money, if that's what you mean. I've told her I'm a blessed pauper. She

makes a pot of money at the Imperial, a good bit more than my income. Look here," he added with a burst of magnanimity. "Come round to the club, or somewhere, for an hour or two, and then I'll take you to have tea with her. You will see for yourself how awfully nice she is, and I'll bet you a fiver that in a week's time you'll congratulate me!"

Captain Ives protested feebly, but his loyalty to the Duchess and a sense of his present failure led him to consent. To confess the truth, it was only at the expense of large drafts upon his loyalty that he was able to maintain the contest. Ives was no fool, in spite of the simplicity which somewhat obtrusively colored his words and deeds; nor was he a victim to blind prejudices. His heart was not in this crusade; he already found it a difficult task to fix the allegiance of his sympathies with the lady who had dispatched him upon it.

Alighting a few hours later at the door of a retiring brown house which nestled, clad in the ivy of antiquity, among the trees of the older part of suburban Hampstead, Lord Noel and his friend were ushered into an empty drawing-room, from the windows of which, however, they could see Miss Faunthorpe, who, closely wrapped in furs, was pacing rapidly (it struck Ives that there was something of the tiger in her walk) up and down the gravel terrace which lay between the back of the house and a rather desolate expanse of empty autumnal flower-beds and neglected lawn. She started when Lord Noel tapped the window, looking up from her tattered acting-copy, and darting a flashing glance of inquiry in the direction of the intruders, a glance which was quickly merged in a smile as she hastened to join them.

At first Miss Faunthorpe seemed to ignore the presence of Captain Ives, though her eyes wandered to him now and again while she overwhelmed Lord Noel with a rippling stream of words and laughter. She had thrown off her fur cloak on entering the room, and Captain Ives observed that her figure was slight and girlish, that she was as pretty as she had ever looked on the stage, and that her tawny copper-colored hair, slightly disarranged, was magnificent, particularly in conjunction with her wonderful eyes, which were blue of the color of lapis lazuli. He found himself wondering a little at her beauty, which was as candid as her manner. He had seldom considered actresses apart from their native boards, and he had always entertained a

vague idea of two types ; the buxom, blonde person, with straw-colored hair and a conspicuous complexion, who played virtuous heroines and flirtatious school-girls ; and the dark-haired, melancholy maiden, with hollow eyes and pale cheeks, who was so intimately associated with black clinging draperies and injured innocence. He had seen Miss Faunthorpe on the stage more than once ; but yet it was something of a surprise to him to find that she did not come under either of these categories. He began to form an extremely depreciated estimate of the discernment and taste of the divorced husband ; he had to remind himself that even if he envied his cousin, it would never do to tell him so.

Lord Noel took advantage of the first break in the flow of the lady's eloquence to introduce his friend with due ceremony. Miss Faunthorpe bowed very graciously, sinking into a low chair and inviting the gentlemen to seat themselves on either side, near the tea-table. For a while their conversation, to which Miss Faunthorpe was the chief contributor, ran freely enough over rather conventional lines : they discussed the new plays, the new theatres, Ibsen and the Home Rule Bill ; the actress spoke with enthusiasm of the part which she had been studying in the garden when they arrived, even reading them fragments from her dog's-eared type-written copy.

Presently, however, it leaked out, from some chance allusion which Lord Noel made, that his cousin had just come up from Appleford ; and this intelligence seemed to impose a certain restraint on Miss Faunthorpe, who became forthwith more sparing of her pleasant laughter, and neglected her little musk-scented cigarette. When her guests rose to take their leave, she hesitated for a moment, while they fumbled with their gloves, glancing askance at Captain Ives, who somewhat prided himself on his detection of her mental attitude. Then she turned to Lord Noel brightly, laying one hand upon his arm. "But you mustn't go without seeing my poor Romeo ! It was understood, when you gave him to me, that you were to be responsible for his health, and he's not at all well. I'm afraid it's nerves,—and you know he is to appear in the new show. Do go and look at the poor doggie ; he's in the library, in front of the fire."

Lord Noel smiled tolerantly, nodding at his cousin. "I expect Romeo has over-eaten himself ! I shall be back in a minute. Or will you come too ? It's only across the passage."

But Miss Faunthorpe interposed, reminding the younger man

of Romeo's aversion to strangers. "He's the sweetest thing!" she continued as the door closed, bestowing one of her brilliant glances upon Captain Ives. "He'll make a great hit, even if I don't."

Ives imagined for an instant that the lady was referring to Lord Noel, and his face (which was less adapted than his language to conceal his thoughts) betrayed his quaint misconception.

"Yes," Miss Faunthorpe added, smiling a little; "he really is a most angelic poodle!"

Her guest uttered some vague, polite remark, and a brief silence followed. Miss Faunthorpe rose and walked towards the window; when she reached it she turned almost immediately, and confronted Ives with a kind of challenge in her pose and expression which struck him, in spite of his embarrassment, as something extraordinarily fine. "Well," she said, quickly, "and what are you going to tell his people—the Duchess?"

Captain Ives gazed at her, at first with surprise and then with a dumb appeal in his candid eyes. She continued with a flash of scorn, "Ah, you don't deny it; that is what you came for!"

The man clasped and unclasped his large, neatly gloved hands helplessly, avoiding her eyes. "My dear Miss Faunthorpe! I came, simply because Lord Noel asked me."

"The Duchess hates the very idea of me! Will you deny that? *Eh bien*, since she sent you to report, what shall you say?"

He glanced at her boldly. "I shall say,—that you are all that is most charming!"

She made him a little mocking curtesy. "Much good that will do! Hasn't her son told her so. And you will add that I am impossible, that I smoke cigarettes, that I——," she paused, shrugging her pretty shoulders impatiently. "And this is what your great people can do! Pray, what would the Duke and Duchess say if I were to send my sister (I would if I had one) down to Appleford to inspect them? Would they behave any better than I have done? Oh, I dare say you think I'm dreadful!"

Lord Noel entered the room at this point and paused open-eyed at the sound of her voice. "I say, I say!" he exclaimed, gazing at them vacantly.

Miss Faunthorpe broke into a laugh. "I declare, I had forgotten all about you! You have interrupted one of my best scenes."

Captain Ives maintained a discreet silence while she went on to question Lord Noel about the invalid Romeo, admiring immensely the tact with which she had retrieved the situation. As they parted a few minutes later, she gave him an indefinable glance, murmuring, "What a dreadful creature you must think me! But you may tell her what you like. I assure you, I don't care."

"Well," said Lord Noel, when the two friends had regained Piccadilly, after a somewhat silent drive, "How about that fiver?"

Ives followed the course of their departing hansom with absent eyes, smiling gravely. He admitted vaguely that Miss Faunthorpe was all that his amorous cousin had painted her; inwardly, his thoughts were dwelling upon other aspects of the lady than the charm of her radiant beauty. He permitted himself to cast a speculative, retrospective glance at the visitor who had arrived, dismounting from an exceedingly smart phaeton, just when they were taking their leave, a middle-aged man with the stamp of the Stock Exchange upon him, to whom Lord Noel had referred as Mr. Nettleton, who often came on business; also he wondered whether his cousin, too, had suspected that when Miss Faunthorpe said good-by to them there were tears in her beautiful blue eyes.

A fortnight later the Duchess of Cidershire received a brief note from Lord Noel; he was not going to marry Miss Faunthorpe, he wrote, so he supposed he might as well come down for the shooting. It may be imagined that this communication on the part of the errant son restored to the parental breakfast-table a degree of genialty, a sense of ease, which for some days past had been conspicuously wanting. The Duke murmured unemotionally, from behind his *Times*, that Noel was after all not such a fool as he looked; he added presently that he didn't mind going so far as five hundred, but Miss Faunthorpe would have to sue for breach of promise before he would give her a penny more. "That dear Philip!" cried the Duchess, rapturously, turning to her daughter Hilda. "How clever he is! How well he must have managed! Noel must positively bring him down with him; I will telegraph at once."

The Duchess felt, in fact, that, in addition to a heavy debt of maternal gratitude, she owed Ives some honorable amends. For several days she had been blaming him for his omission to write

more explicitly. Since his departure she had received from him only a line to say that there was no immediate danger; the degree *nisi* couldn't be made absolute for some weeks; and, as the Duchess complained, if the dreaded event was to happen, it might as well happen now as a month later. But she pardoned his silence now, remarking to her daughter that this was always Philip's way,—to do things without making a fuss; she even quoted his reticence as another instance of his phenomenal discretion,—the less one wrote about one's own, or even other people's love affairs, the better.

A disappointment was in store for the ladies, for, notwithstanding the injunction laid upon him by the telegram, Lord Noel arrived at Appleford unaccompanied by Captain Ives; nor was he able to assure his inquiring mother that her successful ambassador would follow by a later train.

"You haven't quarreled, I hope?" asked the Duchess, anxiously.

"Oh, I don't know! No, not exactly. I suppose, after all, it wasn't his fault."

"His fault! My dear boy! You don't mean to imply that you are sorry you have been so nice and sensible; that you regret having given her up?"

"I never said I had given her up," declared the other, blushing. "I didn't; she gave me up."

The Duchess lifted her eyebrows, with a little ripple of laughter. "That clever Philip! Then—then there won't be a breach of promise case after all? He really is an angel! But do you mean——?"

"This isn't very pleasant for me," put in Lord Noel, impatiently. "The long and short of it is, that ever since Miss Faunthorpe saw Ives she has declined to look at me. He's cut me out; and if you are pleased, well, I don't think you ought to be."

"But—good gracious!" cried the Duchess, growing suddenly grave. "Are you sure? Do you know what you are saying?"

Lord Noel shrugged his shoulders. "I took him to see her—I suppose that was rather foolish—and next day she declined to receive me when I called; and I got a letter from her to say that she was very sorry, and all that, but she couldn't think of marrying into a family which evidently didn't want her!"

"Dear me," said the Duchess, thoughtfully. "That wasn't at all in accordance with one's ideas of an actress. But it proves

that the creature didn't love you, Noel; surely you must feel glad that you got out of it!"

"She never said she did," murmured her son. "I didn't bother myself about that. She said she was so tired of love-making—on the stage."

"And off!" put in the lady, shrewdly. "I dare say she is tired—of pretending. But the real thing—the real thing!"

"Ah!" said Lord Noel, bitterly. "No doubt that's where Ives comes in."

The Duchess looked out of the window for a few minutes, frowning intently. The vague hint which she had intended to convey to Ives, that he should get up a flirtation with Miss Faunthorpe, with a view to showing Lord Noel how trivial a person she was, suddenly flashed across her mind. She felt sure that she had withdrawn the suggestion; indeed, she remembered that Ives had spontaneously objected, reminding her of his position as a man under bonds to her daughter. But if Lord Noel's evident suspicion was based on solid ground, her cousin had apparently carried out this plan of campaign after all, doubtless in default of a better. She felt uneasy, in spite of her reliance on Ives. Her son had escaped from the frying-pan; but it was not pleasant to think that it was just possible that Lord Noel's escape had been effected at his sister's expense—that poor Hilda had fallen into the fire. "Tell me," she said, turning suddenly to her silent son; "you have seen Philip since you received your dismissal?"

He nodded, sullenly. "Of course; I told him all about it, as soon as I had made sure that she meant it. He behaved very queerly about it."

"Oh," murmured the Duchess, "and the wretch didn't write to me! What makes you think that he cut you out, as you express it?"

"Everything," answered Lord Noel. "Doesn't he go to see her every day? And, after all, it's natural," he added, miserably; "he is much better looking, and cleverer, and all that."

"The wretch!" cried the Duchess, breathlessly. "And he's comparatively rich, too! How do you know that he goes to see her? Did he tell you?"

"Not in so many words, but he didn't conceal it. I've simply avoided him since—. Another man told me; a friend of hers, a fellow called Nettleton."

"Miss Faunthorpe appears to be intimate with a good many

gentlemen," commented his mother, dryly. "This is awful, if there's anything in it. But there can't be. And yet, why does he go on seeing her, after——? Oh, Philip, Philip! I must see him at once. And that poor Hilda! Didn't you think of that, Noel? Didn't it occur to you that you ought to interfere?"

Lord Noel shrugged his shoulders again. "I thought there had been quite enough of interference," he said, with something of his mother's tone. "What could I do?"

The Duchess was silent for a minute. "I don't believe it!" she said, doubtfully. "I can't! I must write to Philip." Then, as she left the room, she turned to add, "Mind, not a word of this to your father or Hilda. Remember, it's all your fault, anyhow."

"Oh, I leave it to you!" said the other, morosely. "I'm sick of the whole business. I shall go to the Rockies or the North Pole. Call it my fault, if you like; it's all the same to me."

The letter which the Duchess dispatched to her cousin was artfully artless, the outcome of much deliberation; and Philip Ives, accustomed as he was to read between the lines of his cousin's epistles, did not dream, as he pushed it into a drawer of his writing-table, that he was an object of suspicion, or that the writer's mind was burdened with anything beyond her extreme gratitude for his skillful rescue of her son. If she had any notion as to the true position of affairs, he argued, she would hardly have expatiated on so trivial a subject as the merits of the new cue which had just been made for her in London. At the same time, he was perturbed; the letter, conveying as it did in urgent terms an entreaty that he would come down to Appleford, demanded an answer. He had already, more than once, reproached himself on the score of his silence as regards his infatuation (it amounted to that) for Miss Faunthorpe, and he felt that to write to the Duchess without alluding to it would be a piece of cowardice, a reticence touched strongly with the taint of duplicity.

The longer he pondered the situation over his solitary breakfast-table the less it pleased him; but he decided at last that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, and that before writing the inevitable reply he would offer himself in due form to Miss Faunthorpe, so that, when he wrote, his cousin might understand that his apostasy was a thing irrevocable and complete. He felt little doubt as to what Miss Faunthorpe's



answer would be, though he had seen enough of her to realize dimly that she was not an ordinary woman, that she was capricious, a charming enigma, fantastic, bewildering; he could not accuse himself of presumption in concluding that she had unchangingly encouraged the passion which he had taken no pains to disguise. The signs, he assured himself as the cab drew up at the door of the now familiar ivy-clad house in Hampstead, were almost unaccountable, and not one of them adverse.

It was early in the afternoon (he had chosen the hour with intention), but he was not fortunate enough to find Miss Faunthorpe alone. Her other visitor—Ives recognized him as Mr. Nettleton, the aggressively amiable and opulent nonentity whom he had encountered there before—did not hasten his departure, or spare his stock of facetious stories; and it was only when Ives had begun to despair of accomplishing his object that this interloper (so Ives had ended by regarding him) glanced at his corpulent gold watch, and presently took his leave. Ives resumed his chair with a sigh expressive of unqualified relief.

“At last!” he said, softly, glancing at Miss Faunthorpe, whose eyes, when he encountered them, seemed troubled, lacking their wonted charm of frankness.

“At last?” she echoed, lightly, bending over a vase of flowers. “I’m afraid you don’t appreciate Mr. Nettleton; I’m very sorry, for——”

“I’ve no doubt he’s an excellent man—in his place.”

“Poor Mr. Nettleton!” exclaimed the other, with a curious smile. “Did you regard him as *de trop*?”

“Ah—precisely! When I have been longing all the time to tell you that you have never looked so charming—that I adore you!”

She raised her eyebrows, smiling faintly, adjusting a feathery golden-brown chrysanthemum in the bosom of her dress. “Thanks—but ought you to say it? Aren’t you afraid that the Duchess will hear you?”

“That is my affair,” he said, with the shadow of a frown. “All I care for, what I have been waiting for, is to hear you say that you love me—that you will marry me!”

He had risen now, and stood facing her, gazing directly into her eyes. She drew back, and he noticed that her face was pale and irresponsive; its expression baffled him; it suggested an embarrassment of which he had imagined her incapable. “Don’t keep me in suspense!” he pleaded, gently. “Surely——”

"Wait!" she cried, quickly, a sudden flush of color suffusing her cheeks. "I told you that I was a dreadful creature, and now you will believe me. And yet, goodness knows, I meant to stop you before! Oh, didn't you see that I hated you?"

Ives stared at her with a blank face. "You hated me!" he murmured, slowly.

"At first, when you came—from her! I don't quite hate you now; I wish I did, it would be easier to tell you——"

"But if you don't hate me! Why, what have you to tell?"

"That—that I have treated you shamefully!" she murmured. "And after all, didn't you deserve it? How have you treated your cousin, his sister?"

"You—you have been playing with me!" he put in quickly, reading her expression now in a flash of inspiration. "You have been so cruel?"

She bowed her head silently. "It seemed a fair revenge; I never thought you would take it so seriously." Then she broke into a nervous laugh. "After all, you knew that I was an actress! Can I help my nature? Forgive me, forget our little comedy!"

"Comedy! You can call it that! And Lord Noel——? Why——? I don't understand."

"Why I dismissed him, broke it off? Ah, for that I have to thank you; you gave me the cue, the occasion. But I should have done it anyhow," she added, in a minute. "It was only because he wouldn't take 'no.' He was a nice boy, but he bored me; it would never have done!"

He took a step towards the window and gazed out at the dreary garden, where the rain pattered forlornly on the fallen leaves; recovering his self-possession slowly, proving himself, as a man rallying from a stunning, physical shock proves his limbs in fear of broken bones. When he turned, a revulsion of feeling, a healthy reaction had already set in; he was even calm enough to appreciate dimly the fine irony of his punishment.

Miss Faunthorpe anticipated him when he was about to break the silence. "I have a further confession to make; there is no end to my enormities! You may as well know the worst of me; I have to-day engaged myself to marry Mr. Nettleton."

She raised her eyes for an instant as she spoke, courageously, but Ives fancied that their radiance was dimmed by tears. "You have been making a fool of me all the time?" he asked, gently. "Excuse the question; it will make it easier for me."

She nodded silently, with lowered gaze.

“Well, you have succeeded; I admit it freely. You have taught me a lesson for which I can even guess that I ought to be grateful. And it seems to me that, if I say that I forgive you, that I bear you no malice, accounts will be square between us.”

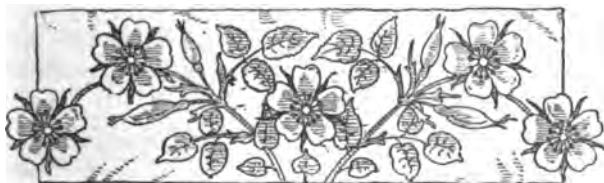
Miss Faunthorpe blushed. “You are generous; you make me feel more than ever ashamed.”

He held out his hand as if to say good-by, and she took it frankly, holding it for an instant. “You *did* come to break it off?” she asked, timidly, as they parted. “My engagement with Lord Noel, I mean,—though you didn’t know whether I cared for him? Yes? Ah, then that makes it easier for me! Good-by,—forgive me and forget!”

He still hesitated. “You were acting,—all the time?” he asked.

Miss Faunthorpe nodded. “All the time! After all,” she added as she left the room, “I didn’t know for certain what you intended; I didn’t mean that you should go so far.”

As Ives fared on his homeward way across Regent’s Park, he congratulated himself more than once in that he had not written to the Duchess,—that he had not burned his ships. Strangely enough, he felt relieved and even elated; if he had not won, it seemed to him that he had at least saved his stake; and he was happier than he would have been if he had not found the courage to risk it. He was able to contemplate the prospect of his return to Appleford, and all that it implied, with a resignation which was, at least, a very tolerable imitation of equanimity. He found himself appreciating from a new point of view the immense propriety, the fitness and security, of his match with his cousin, Lady Hilda.



## THE LAST KISS \*

BY ERNEST DELANCEY PIERSON



It had been snowing all day, silently, heavily; the road leading to the cemetery of Irkorwar was blotted out. Sadi Barnow's house, with its conical roof of thatch, was white as a sugar-loaf. One might have imagined that the elements, in a spirit of rebuke for the reformed Jew's uncleanness, had covered his dirty kennel with a royal robe of ermine.

Sadi stuck his head out of the long, narrow window. He could not see through the sheet of greased paper that took the place of glass. He turned his grotesque head towards the church-yard, where the black crosses and the crumbling tombs, half covered with snow, assumed strange and fantastic shapes.

"'Tis a dirty night and cursed cold," he muttered, wagging his grizzled head, which was covered by a moth-eaten rat-skin cap. "I shall be forced to go to bed to keep warm, or I shall have my legs frozen like old Urkowitch, who now goes about on wooden pins that I cut with my own hands from the graveyard yonder. Yet he has no need of shoes, the pig; so after all he may be the gainer."

He wagged his head thoughtfully back and forth, as if debating in his mind if it were not a good thing to lose one's limbs and so be rid forever of the necessity of buying any more boots—boots were so cursedly costly, and he could not well do without them in these snowy months.

"Ah, it is hard for an honest Jew, a reformed Jew, to keep warm in this cursed climate, for fuel is scarce since the Count took to guarding his beggarly hedges. May he die of the cold himself, the dirty magyar," and he blew on his fingers to warm them.

"Ah, if one could only live as cheaply as those silent fellows

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yonder," he added, looking toward the cemetery. "They sleep well; the good little worms have long ago quit their company. They are never hungry; they have no need of fuel. Ah! they will have fire enough one day, never fear, some of them," and he laughed in a crackling way, like a puff of wind through a dry hedge.

He looked up at the sky and shook his head. "Yes, it will snow to-morrow and for many days to come. I shall be shut up here like a rat in its hole. But never mind, it will kill many of the good little birds—many. Perhaps a lamb may stray away from its flock—who knows. 'Tis many months since I have eaten meat," and he rubbed his thin lips together softly. "Many folks should die of cold these cruel days, and they will be carried here, and Sadi will be paid a broad piece for every one, for none but nobles lodge in my quiet town. My ghosts are of the best society, thank God," and his mouth expanded in a phantom smile that disclosed his broken yellow teeth.

He nodded his head and turned to close the window, but far to the South, over the waste of snow, he saw a black speck. It grew larger, more distinct. The long bony figure of a boy running hard came into view.

"Ah, 'tis Israel," said Sadi, nodding. "He has been to Irkorwar; he will have news to tell me. But why does he run? It is wrong. To run makes one hungry, and to encourage hunger is to foster gluttony. He will want to eat all the beautiful soup I have made. The soup from the herbs I gathered off the good graves, when they were green, before the snow fell. It is terrible to bring up a growing lad. He eats like a wolf. Why must boys eat when they work so little? Why?" shaking his head, sadly.

Israel had come within speaking distance. He was panting with fatigue from his hard run; his yellow face was white with rime; his long hair, which fell in greasy strands to his shoulders, crusted with snow, framing in his thin, sharp face.

"Have you the money?" asked Sadi, opening the door just wide enough for the boy to squeeze in, and eying him eagerly.

"No," said Israel, sinking down on the mattress in the corner, and bending over the fireplace, where some dry cow-dung was smouldering.

"No money!" howled Sadi, beating his breast. "More excuses. Always more lies to rob me of my just dues. Nay, then they shall be thrown out to-morrow, if they die in the ditch—

I swear it. We shall see," gritting his broken teeth. "We shall see. I will myself go to the town to-morrow, though I must swim the Danube! Cursed Christians, they shall not mock me to my beard."

"But, father, the little one had such soft eyes; she pleaded so hard. At the end of the week, perhaps sooner, all will be paid; they swore it by the cross—they——"

"Fool, to be tricked by a woman's wiles. You are unworthy of your name, milksop! goat! I go to-morrow, by Abraham's beard! and no dozen pairs of eyes shall turn me from my purpose. Go to bed, you whelp! We must make that beautiful fire last until this cursed snow is over. Go to bed, I say, or you will need in the Spring that beautiful grave I made you dig for yourself," as he spoke taking down a spade to rake out the embers.

"But, father, I have more to tell you."

"What then?" gruffly.

"His Highness, the Count Pavlona, is dead."

"Ah!" pricking up his ears.

"Yes. He was slain in a duel by the illustrious Pan Count Orloff."

"Some Jezabel's work, I'll warrant me."

"Even so. A woman was at the bottom of it. But his death means gold for us. The funeral is even now on its way here. I ran all the way from the town that I might warn you to be ready in time. They are coming with a huge hearse and a great host of town-folk."

"Pig of Pesth, why did you not tell me before?" kicking back the embers into the fireplace, and taking down a rusty, black cloak with a cape from the wall. "The Count Pavlovna dead! Ah, that is well. He shall be received with fitting honors in my town. It is long since I have had a visitor of his house. The vault was last opened for his wife. A beautiful corpse," rubbing his hands together thoughtfully. "I never saw a finer body. And the jewels, how they flamed out when I raised the coffin-lid. I thought my beard was singed."

"Were they rubies?" asked Israel, looking towards the fire.

"Curse you!" snarled Sadi, shaking him by the throat. "What do you mean? You have been spying on me, you dog."

"May the wolves devour me if I have."

His father eyed him long and suspiciously, and then pushed him away. He was satisfied.

"There! there! my son; I was only trying to frighten you, that's all. It was just a joke of your old father's. I am superstitious in my old age. To talk of rubies frightens me. They are so like blood, drops of blood!"

Sadi had now completed his toilet. He was clad entirely in black, and wore on his head a conical cap. In one hand he carried a long black staff, surmounted by a tarnished brass cross. In the other, a horn lantern.

"Come," he called out to Israel, "and bring a broom with you. We may have to clean out the Count's lodgings in 'The Hotel of the Death's Head.'"

The son gave his shoulders a twist to shake off some of the lumps of snow that still clung to his cape. They went out into the night.

"Can that be a star yonder?" pointing towards the distance. "There's another. It is going to be clear. I shall have a fair day for my journey."

"It is the funeral. Eight candles on each side of the bier, tall as men. I saw them at Irkorwar."

"Fools to waste good candle-grease on the dead, who cannot see. It should be saved that living eyes might profit by it. Do they think he will find the way to heaven easier! But hurry, Israel, we must give the noble Pan a warm reception, though it is so cursed cold. They are rich, the family; they will not begrudge a few florins to the worthy Jew,—the reformed Jew, Sadi Barnow, who guards their dead so well."

They hurried on, and opened the iron portals of the mausoleum. A cold blast of air, like the breath of the dead, puffed out from the darkness. The Jew recoiled with a shudder, as he peered into the crypt, shading the candle in the lantern with a claw-like hand. "Room for another," he cried, mockingly, into the depths. "Make way, you that sleep, for the last of the house of Pavlovna, who comes to claim your hospitality to-night." A gust of wind blew a shower of snow into the vault in a white column.

"What is it?" asked Israel.

"I thought it was the wife who had risen from her bed to greet her lord. I am full of foolish fancies in my old age. They will not wake. Oh, no, not they. They sleep too sound, too sound."

The murmur of many voices was heard over the snow plain that grew louder and more distinct. They went out by the gate of the cemetery. An outrider in black was the first to approach.

"Is everything prepared, dog?" he asked.

"Everything, illustrious Pan. We have spent hours in the vault, my son and I. There was much to be done, and it was cruel cold. The great nobles will not forget how we have toiled in the midst of were-wolves and vampires who would have destroyed us had we not armed ourselves with holy water."

"Be silent, they are coming," wheeling his horse and riding back. They crouched down in the shadow of the great gate and waited. First came the priest bearing aloft a cross and shivering in his canonicals. Close behind him two little boys, their fair hair sprinkled with silvery rime, swung censers in their benumbed fingers. Snow had wreathed the gilt cross, and sparkled on the satin vestments of the priest in the light of the flaring torches.

"Some of these fools will die of the storm," whispered Sadi, rubbing his hands together. "There'll be more work for me—more work for me."

"Hush, or they will hear you," said Israel.

Borne by eight servants of the house of Pavlovna, the great hearse came into view. The bier was draped with black velvet, embroidered with holy emblems in silver. Upon it lay in state the body of Count Pavlovna, his hands, holding lilies, were folded on his breast. He was dressed in the full uniform of his regiment, and at his feet in a glittering mound were piled his sword and helmet, his armor, and trophies won in the chase. The light of the eight great candles burned about his bed, and brought out with startling distinctness his pale, stern features. After the catafalque came a crowd of villagers and comrades of his regiment, all on foot, walking with bowed heads through the drifting snow. The silence was only broken by the crackling of the resin in the torches, and the occasional sob of some old servitor. The censers swung, the wreaths of perfumed smoke rose towards the misty stars that glimmered faintly now through the gauzy mist. The priest chanted hoarsely the Miserere, stopping now and then to cough feebly.

The Jew heard him, and murmured.

"I shall soon gather you into my fold, most holy father."

The last rites were performed. All that was mortal of the Count of Pavlovna was about to be laid away in its last resting-place.

"Wait!" called a voice from the crowd.

The mass of people divided on either side. A woman came



forth. She was bare-headed. Her long, black hair, gemmed with the glistening rime, fell loosely to her waist. She looked like the spirit of the storm—all in white—save for the golden girdle about her waist.

They started from her as if she had stepped from one of the solemn sepulchres on either side. Their frightened eyes recognized her. She was Ritta, the woman he had loved, for whom he had fought, for whom he had been slain.

She did not weep; her eyes were dry; they shone like fireflies in the midnight of her hair. She walked forward slowly, until she stood beside the bier. Her lips were moving as if she were muttering words.

She spoke to the dead in a tremulous voice, so faint that no one heard but Barnow and his son crouching by a tomb near her side.

"Ivan," she said, caressingly, "I can never be yours in this world; it is too late, my love. Wait for me; the time will not be long. We shall meet again where none may divide us—neither death nor life—where we shall live through all eternities as one. Wait!"

She drew from her hand a ring and placed it on his finger. She stooped and kissed him lightly, reverentially on the forehead. The crowd parted to let her pass. Once only she paused to look back. Her eyes filled with tears turned towards the silent figure framed in the gold of the flaring torches. She raised one hand towards the sullen sky and its few faint stars. "Wait," and was gone.

"What prompted me to spend this dismal month at Irkorwar," murmured Count Orloff, looking out through the diamond panes on the frozen Danube and the heavy falling snow. "To keep warm in this mouldy old chateau is impossible, it is as damp as a pauper's coffin." He shuddered in spite of the fur-lined dressing robe he wore, and looked furtively towards the shadowy corners of the room in a frightened way. He sat down by the great fireplace moodily, inclosed in the warm circle of light the flames threw out.

"Strange that I should always think of *him* in this sort of weather," he said, stretching out his feet towards the blaze. "On just such a night Ivan was laid away—freezing—snowy. Shall I forget it? I dare not look out of my window—I seem to see his face, his reproachful eyes in every whirling drift. I should flee from these fancies, they come from living so much

alone. Pesth is the place for me. There is drinking, gambling, dancing there, and one can forget." He ran his fingers through his long, black curls with a gesture of weariness and turned to trim one of the candles that was burning blue. He was uneasy. He could not rest quietly in his chair. Some shadowy presence seemed to be standing behind him. He dared not look around.

He paced up and down the room nervously with his eyes on the ground, finally pausing again before a window. The snow was falling in finer flakes, the snow wastes spread out before him in a sheet of silver.

"Ah, the wolves are abroad to-night," as a moaning sound was borne over the plain. Far to the West, on the edge of the forest, some dark and shadowy figures could be seen gliding over the snow waste.

Orloff turned suddenly away and brushed his hand across his eyes.

"I saw it plainly," he whispered, with a look of horror. "A face in the snow. What a fool I am," laughing nervously. The wailing sound was heard again, this time nearer. He went back to the fire and stirred the logs noisily.

"I shall go to Pesth to-morrow. This life is killing me." He sat down and rested his face on his hand.

"Excellency!"

It was the valet Constantine who spoke. He had entered noiselessly in his great fur-lined boots.

"Well?" the Count asked, without looking up.

"A lady is without. She was pursued in her sleigh by the wolves. She is ill from the terror of the chase. She is high-born if I may read the signs. She claims your hospitality."

"Noble or not she is free to stay as long as she will. You know what to do—show her every attention; bid Vasia light a fire in the gray room; place the wardrobe of the Countess at her disposal. Do all this at once, for she must be wet and weary and in need of rest."

"I obey, Excellency," preparing to go. He walked towards the door, then paused. "You will see her?"

The Count started. "I! why should I?" then, after a moment's thought, "later, perhaps, when she has rested."

Constantine bowed to his girdle and went out.

After he had gone, Orloff rose and walked nervously up and down the room,

"I was not wrong—I am not quite hopelessly mad, as yet, though I may become so if I linger in this chateau much longer. It was a face I saw in the snow. This woman's. But it was familiar to me, I had seen it before, and it reminded me of him."

He bowed his head in thought, and then looked towards the door that opened on the great staircase.

"Strange! but I am curious as a woman to look upon her face, to know who she is—could it be?" passing his thin white hand wearily across his forehead. "Impossible! In all these years I have heard nothing of her." He resumed his walking. "I will go down. I must satisfy myself. I can stand behind the arras and watch her unobserved."

Orloff left the room; his feet were on the marble stairs. He passed the shadowy portraits of his ancestors on either hand, and gained noiselessly the lower hall.

He looked out from between the curtains. The great door of the chateau was open, the snowy air of the night blew on his heated face.

Constantine and another servant were leading, half supporting a slender figuré towards the fireplace. They took off her dark blue cloak, with its gray fur-trimming, and placed her in a soft arm-chair close to the blaze. He had only half a glimpse of her face. It was stony white, and the eyes were closed.

She rose unsteadily to her feet, and for a moment her eyes looked vaguely around the sympathetic circle of servants.

Her eyes fell on a portrait of Orloff's father above the great fireplace. She started, and laid one trembling hand on the arm of the chair for support.

"Who—who is the lord of this house?" she asked, in a low voice, while a shiver ran through her.

"The Count Orloff, Altesse."

She turned with a cry, her eyes wide open, staring.

He had a full view of her face—distorted, pale, in its frame of blue-black hair. Her lips trembled as though she would speak, but no sound came from them. He knew her now!

She turned and walked unsteadily towards the door.

"This way, noble lady. Your room is prepared for you," said Constantine.

"No," in a choking voice, "I must go—I must go."

"But the snow—the wolves—you will be lost."

"I have but to choose between the wolves without and the wolves within. I will trust to the mercy of the first."

The servants tried to detain her. She brushed them aside.

She had reached the door, her hand trembled on the great bronze knob.

"The house of the wolf," she murmured. "There is blood on the floor, on the stairs!" Her face was flushed with fever. Her eyes burned with a strange light.

Suddenly with a little moan the lids fell. She had fainted.

"Ritta! Ritta!"

It was Orloff that spoke. She was in his arms. He was pressing wild kisses on her lips, her eyes, her hair.

They bore her tenderly into the vast room, all gray and silver, where for many decades the former Countesses of Orloff had slept. They laid her in the great bed with its twisted columns, where she lay like a pearl in its shell, almost lost among the snowy drapery.

All night Vasia watched by the side of the flaming logs, where she brewed warm possets over the flames, while Ritta babbled and tossed in delirium.

"How fares it with your charge?" asked Orloff, who entered in the gray of morning. He had not slept the whole night long. There were deep lines of weariness about his eyes.

"'Tis only a fever," said Vasia. "It will pass away," and stooped to stir the fire.

Orloff drew near the bed; he looked down on the flushed face of the sufferer with tender eyes.

"Ritta! Ritta!" he murmured.

Her lips seemed to move as she tossed in her sleep. He bent his head to listen.

"I have entered the house of the wolf," she murmured. "The walls are red; there is blood everywhere. Take me away! Take me away!"

He shuddered and withdrew.

The days passed; the fever was slow in leaving her. Still, in the great bed Ritta tossed and moaned. Almost hourly Orloff was at her side or watched her moodily from a seat by the fire; this woman whose lover he had killed three years ago.

She seemed to be vaguely conscious of his presence. At first shuddering when he drew near, then growing accustomed to his presence. There were even times when he fancied her eyes wore a grateful look as they rested on him.

This went on for many days. Slowly the barrier of ice that had stood between them melted away.

Then Ritta was able to move about the room leaning on Vasia's arm for support. If the old servant was away Orloff gave her his arm. Vasia's visits grew infrequent. The time came when Ritta must go away. He learned of her intention and his heart was sad.

It was in the evening. He entered her room. He threw himself at her feet.

"Ritta," he said, "do not go away—stay here always. Be my wife!"

She took his supplicating hands in hers and gently raised him to his feet.

"It is too late. There is a grave between us," sadly. "By that grave I took his ring of betrothal and I am his for all time. Before I came here, before you saved my life, I hated you, I wanted to kill you—but now——"

She buried her face in her hands.

"Leave me, leave me," she said, faintly, afraid to look in his face. "Do not ask me."

He bent over her and took her hot hands in his.

"You do not want to kill me now for what is past?" he whispered. "Yet if you can never love me I would lay down my life willingly."

Then he was conscious of moist hands about his throat and heard the sweetest voice he had ever heard, save in his dreams, saying, "I do not want your life—I want your love."

A sweet silence fell between them after this sudden revelation. Ritta was the first to speak.

"Let me go, André," she said, releasing herself from his arms. "Let me go, my love, to that sad place where Ivan sleeps. I must give him back his betrothal ring. It burns my hand. As long as I bear it, we shall not be free to love. His shadow will always stand between us."

She stooped and kissed him lightly on the forehead. She turned and walked to the door.

"Wait for me. I shall soon return. I owe this in justice to the dead."

She passed out of the door. He heard her light step on the stairs, then the clang of the great portal.

Then he awakened from his sudden surprise.

"She has gone out in the storm. Without hat or cloak. She is still mad with the fever. She will perish."

Then he rushed down the stairs and into-the night in the path of the flying figure.

Sadi Barnow was making his nightly rounds through the silent city of the dead according to his custom. In one hand he carried his horn lantern, and as he peered into the shadows he sang in his cracked voice:

“Oh, shovel their bones under the stones,  
The commoner, noble and clown,  
They may murmur and moan  
But when death claims his own  
I gather them into my town,  
I gather them into my town.”

“Ah! what was that?”—breaking off abruptly in his song and letting the lantern fall on the snow. He looked around, stretching out his long neck like a bird to peer into the shadows. Then he laughed nervously. “Why, Sadi, after all these years are you getting as fearful of the dark as that young pig Israel. Remember that you are on consecrated ground, you have been blessed with holy water and all the were-wolves and vampires in Hungary may not harm you.”

He took up his lantern and resumed his walk :

“I gather them into my town,”

he sang again. “I afraid of ghosts? ha! ha! not I. These good people sleep too well. They are too comfortable to stick their noses out of a nice warm grave on such a night.”

He paused again. Certainly he heard the sound of footsteps crunching the dry snow. He hesitated whether to hide or stand his ground.

“Sadi! Sadi Barnow!” cried a voice from the shadows.

His sharp eyes turned in the direction of the sound. The snow aided him. He saw a black figure gliding over the snow; a woman he thought.

“I never heard of a black ghost,” he said to himself, “so what cause have I to be afraid. Who calls on Sadi Barnow?” he cried in a loud voice.

The figure drew nearer. She was at his side now. By the dim light of the lantern he saw a bareheaded woman with flowing hair and strange feverish eyes that glittered in the semi-gloom.

He raised the lantern and scrutinized her pallid face slowly.

“You recognize me?” she asked.

"Even so, Altesse. If my old eyes have not deceived me, I was honored in seeing you last not far from where we stand, on a stormy night when the noble Pan——"

"It matters not when you saw me, where or how. Listen to me. I have work for you to do." She looked around her a moment affrightedly, and seized him half fiercely by the sleeve.

"Tell me. Have you the keys of the Pavlovna vaults?"

He hesitated, calculating in his mind whether there was money to be made out of this strange woman.

"Answer!" she cried, shaking him roughly. "Are you dumb. I intend to pay you well."

"Most gracious lady, I should lose my place if——"

"I will get you another. I want to enter that vault. Give me the keys."

Still he hesitated.

"I am an old man. I have served the town faithfully for many years, and women are forgetful," he murmured.

"Then take my jewels since you doubt me," tearing a necklace of pearls from her throat and thrusting them into his eager hands.

"Give me but half an hour there alone, that is all I ask. No one shall know of it, I swear to you, and you shall have a hundred florins on the morrow."

He thrust the pearls into one of the great pockets of his coat. "If I consent to this—this sacrilege—it is not for the jewels," he whined, "but to be of service to a noble lady. You will not forget the two hundred florins on the morrow, Altesse?"

"You have my word, Jew, let that suffice. And now hasten, for time threatens me."

He sighed, picked up his lantern and led the way down through one of the melancholy streets of tombs that seemed full of threatening shadows. Ritta shuddered, then, thinking of André Orloff her heart grew strong and she walked firmly on.

Sadi paused before a great stone vault surmounted by a Maltese cross. His key grating in the rusty lock seemed to awaken strange echoes within, as if the dead had risen from their beds to protest against the disturbers of their peace. She was half fainting with fright; all the superstitious stories of her childhood rose before her, but she thought again of her lover and grew brave.

"Open in God's name," she cried, fearing her courage would fail. The door swung back, creaking harshly on its hinges.

"Give me the lantern," she said.

"And you will not forget the three hundred florins," whined Sadi.

"You shall have five. Only go."

She snatched the lantern from his hand and pushed him away. She entered the vault. But not alone. A shadow entered noiselessly behind her. She heard nothing, saw nothing, thinking only of the terrible task that was to be accomplished. She did not know that the shadow was Orloff, that he was at her side watching every movement she made from behind one of the pillars that upheld a canopy above the dead.

The lantern was shaking in her hands. She laid it down and for a moment she kneeled and prayed by the side of the sarcophagus that held all that was mortal of her former lover.

The sickly yellow light from the lantern filled the tomb with strange shadows. The air seemed peopled with moving figures, the twisted columns seemed to writhe as if endowed with life.

She rose from her knees, but her lips were stiff, moving as if she were muttering prayers. With reverential hand she raised the coffin-lid, steadying herself against the very pillar where André was crouching with dilated eyes.

He had a feeling, a nameless terror, that something horrible was about to happen. He wanted to cry aloud, but the mould of the tomb was in his throat and his lips gave forth no sound.

"Dead, whom I loved," she murmured in sad and reverent voice. "Dead, whom I dread, whom I deceived—I come to give you back the pledge of our betrothal. Give me my freedom and pardon me my treason!"

Then, through the misty light, Orloff's tired eyes beheld a wondrous thing. He saw Ritta raise the fleshless hand, folded on the arid breast. He heard the ring tinkle down the bony finger.

Then a wave of blue vapor seemed to shroud the living and the dead. The hand was no longer in hers—it had glided about her throat. Slowly, slowly she was drawn down to that awful shape. She felt upon her lips the last kiss of love and death!

The morning broke in mist and rain. Sadi Barnow sang hoarsely to himself as he dug a new grave in one corner of the cemetery. "A strange night's work," chuckled the Jew. "The Countess Ritta paid dearly for her visit—dear, indeed. Ah, these women are deceivers ever. To think of her dying in a churchyard to save funeral expenses!" And he laughed aloud, and beat upon the clods with his spade as he broke out again in a merry song.



## THE TYPE-WRITTEN LETTER

By ROBERT BARR

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WHEN a man has battled with poverty all his life, fearing it as he fought it, feeling for its skinny throat to throttle it, and yet dreading all the while the coming of the time when it would gain the mastery and throttle him—when such a man is told that he is rich, it might be imagined he would receive the announcement with hilarity. When Richard Denham realized that he was wealthy he became even more sobered than usual, and drew a long breath, as if he had been running a race and had won it. The man who brought him the news had no idea he had told Denham anything novel. He merely happened to say, "You are a rich man, Mr. Denham, and will never miss it."

Denham had never before been called a rich man, and up to that moment he had not thought of himself as wealthy. He wrote out the check asked of him, and his visitor departed gratefully, leaving the merchant with something to ponder over. He was as surprised with the suddenness of the thing as if someone had left him a legacy. Yet the money was all of his own accumulating, but his struggle had been so long, and he had been so hopeless about it, that from mere habit he exerted all his energies long after the enemy was overcome—just as the troops at New Orleans fought a fierce battle, not knowing the war was over. He had sprung from such a hopelessly poor family. Poverty had been their inheritance from generation to generation. It was the invariable legacy that father had left to son in the Denham family. All had accepted their lot with uncomplaining resignation, until Richard resolved that he would at least have a fight for it. And now the fight had been won. Denham sat in his office, staring at the dingy wall-paper so long, that Rogers, the chief clerk, put his head in and said in a deferential voice:

"Anything more to-night, Mr. Denham?"

Denham started as if that question in that tone had not been asked him every night for years.

"What's that, what's that?" he cried.

Rogers was astonished, but too well-trained to show it.

"Anything more to-night, Mr. Denham."

"Ah, quite so. No, Rogers, thank you, nothing more."

"Good-night, Mr. Denham."

"Eh? Oh, yes. Good-night, Rogers, good-night."

When Mr. Denham left his office and went out into the street, everything had an unusual appearance to him. He walked long, unheeding the direction. He looked at the fine residences and realized that he might have a fine residence if he wanted it. He saw handsome carriages; he, too, might set up an equipage. The satisfaction these thoughts produced was brief. Of what use would a fine house or an elegant carriage be to him? He knew no one to invite to the house or to ride with him in the carriage. He began to realize how utterly alone in the world he was. He had no friends, no acquaintances even. The running dog, with its nose to the ground, sees nothing of the surrounding scenery. He knew men in a business way, of course, and doubtless each of them had a home in the suburbs somewhere, but he could not take a business man by the shoulders and say to him, "Invite me to your house; I am lonely; I want to know people."

If he got such an invitation he would not know what to do with himself. He was familiar with the counting-room and its language, but the drawing-room was an unexplored country to him, where an unknown tongue was spoken. On the road to wealth he had missed something, and it was now too late to go back for it. Only the day before, he had heard one of the clerks, who did not know he was within earshot, allude to him as "the old man." He felt as young as ever he did, but the phrase, so lightly spoken, made him catch his breath.

As he was now walking through the park, and away from the busy streets, he took off his hat and ran his fingers through his grizzled hair, looking at his hand when he had done so, as if the gray, like wet paint, had come off. He thought of a girl he knew once, who perhaps would have married him if he had asked her, as he was tempted to do. But that had always been the mistake of the Denhams. They had all married young except himself, and so sunk deeper into the mire of poverty, pressed down by a rapidly-increasing progeny. The girl had married a baker, he remembered. Yes, that was a long time ago. The clerk was not far wrong when he called him an old

man. Suddenly, another girl rose before his mental vision—a modern girl—very different indeed to the one who married the baker. She was the only woman in the world with whom he was on speaking terms, and he knew her merely because her light and nimble fingers played the business sonata of one note on his office typewriter. Miss Gale was pretty, of course—all typewriter girls are—and it was generally understood in the office that she belonged to a good family who had come down in the world. Her somewhat independent air deepened this conviction and kept the clerks at a distance. She was a sensible girl, who realized that the typewriter paid better than the piano, and accordingly turned the expertness of her white fingers to the former instrument. Richard Denham sat down upon a park bench. “Why not?” he asked himself. There was no reason against it, except that he felt he had not the courage. Nevertheless, he formed a desperate resolution.

Next day business went on as usual. Letters were answered, and the time arrived when Miss Gale came in to see if he had any further commands that day. Denham hesitated. He felt vaguely that a business office was not the proper place for a proposal; yet he knew he would be at a disadvantage anywhere else. In the first place, he had no plausible excuse for calling upon the young woman at home, and, in the second place, he knew if he once got there he would be stricken dumb. It must either be at his office or nowhere.

“Sit down a moment, Miss Gale,” he said at last; “I wanted to consult you about a matter—about a business matter.”

Miss Gale seated herself, and automatically placed on her knee the shorthand writing-pad, ready to take down his instructions. She looked up at him expectantly. Denham, in an embarrassed manner, ran his finger through his hair.

“I am thinking,” he began, “of taking a partner. The business is very prosperous now. In fact, it has been so for some time.”

“Yes?” said Miss Gale, interrogatively.

“Yes. I think I should have a partner. It is about that I wanted to speak to you.”

“Don’t you think it would be better to consult with Mr. Rogers? He knows more about business than I. But perhaps it is Mr. Rogers who is to be the partner?”

“No, it is not Rogers. Rogers is a good man. But—it is not Rogers.”

"Then, I think in an important matter like this, Mr. Rogers, or some one who knows the business as thoroughly as he does, would be able to give you advice that would be of some value."

"I don't want advice, exactly. I have made up my mind to have a partner, if the partner is willing."

Denham mopped his brow. It was going to be even more difficult than he had anticipated.

"Is it, then, a question of the capital the partner is to bring in?" asked Miss Gale, anxious to help him.

"No, no. I don't wish any capital. I have enough for both. And the business is very prosperous, Miss Gale—and—and has been."

The young woman raised her eyebrows in surprise.

"You surely don't intend to share the profits with a partner who brings no capital into the business?"

"Yes—yes, I do. You see, as I said, I have no need for more capital."

"Oh, if that is the case, I think you should consult Mr. Rogers before you commit yourself."

"But Rogers wouldn't understand."

"I'm afraid I don't understand either. It seems to me a foolish thing to do—that is, if you want my advice."

"Oh, yes, I want it. But it isn't as foolish as you think. I should have had a partner long ago. That is where I made the mistake. I've made up my mind on that."

"Then I don't see that I can be of any use—if your mind is already made up."

"Oh, yes, you can. I'm a little afraid that my offer may not be accepted."

"It is sure to be, if the man has any sense. No fear of such an offer being refused. Offers like that are not to be had every day. It will be accepted."

"Do you really think so, Miss Gale? I am glad that is your opinion. Now, what I wanted to consult you about, is the form of the offer. I would like to put it—well—delicately, you know, so that it would not be refused, nor give offense."

"I see. You want me to write a letter to him?"

"Exactly, exactly," cried Denham, with some relief. He had not thought of sending a letter before. Now, he wondered why he had not thought of it. It was so evidently the best way out of a situation that was extremely disconcerting.

"Have you spoken to him about it?"

"To him? What him?"

"To your future partner, about the proposal?"

"No, no. Oh, no. That is—I have spoken to nobody but you."

"And you are determined not to speak to Mr. Rogers before you write?"

"Certainly not. It's none of Rogers's business."

"Oh, very well," said Miss Gale, shortly, bending over her writing-pad.

It was evident that her opinion of Denham's wisdom was steadily lowering. Suddenly, she looked up.

"How much shall I say the annual profits are? Or do you want that mentioned?"

"I—I don't think I would mention that. You see, I don't wish this arrangement to be carried out on a monetary basis—not altogether."

"On what basis then?"

"Well—I can hardly say. On a personal basis, perhaps. I rather hope that the person—that my partner—would, you know, like to be associated with me."

"On a friendly basis, do you mean?" asked Miss Gale, mercilessly.

"Certainly. Friendly, of course—and perhaps more than that."

Miss Gale looked up at him with a certain hopelessness of expression.

"Why not write a note inviting your future partner to call upon you here, or anywhere else that would be convenient, and then discuss the matter?"

Denham look frightened.

"I thought of that, but it wouldn't do. No; it wouldn't do. I would much rather settle everything by correspondence."

"I am afraid I shall not be able to compose a letter that will suit you. There seem to be so many difficulties. It is very unusual."

"That is true, and that is why I knew no one but you could help me, Miss Gale. If it pleases you, it will please me."

Miss Gale shook her head, but, after a few moments, she said, "How will this do?"

"Dear Sir"—

"Wait a moment," cried Mr. Denham; "that seems rather a formal opening, doesn't it? How would it read if you put it, 'Dear friend?'"

"If you wish it so." She crossed out the "sir" and substituted the word suggested. Then she read the letter:

"Dear Friend: I have for some time past been desirous of taking a partner, and would be glad if you would consider the question and consent to join me in this business. The business is, and has been for several years, very prosperous, and, as I shall require no capital from you, I think you will find my offer a very advantageous one. I will——"

"I—I don't think I would put it quite that way," said Denham, with some hesitation. "It reads as if I were offering everything, and that my partner—well, you see what I mean."

"It's the truth," said Miss Gale, defiantly.

"Better put it on the friendly basis, as you suggested a moment ago."

"I didn't suggest anything, Mr. Denham. Perhaps it would be better if you would dictate the letter exactly as you want it. I knew I could not write one that would please you."

"It does please me, but I am thinking of my future partner. You are doing first-rate—better than I could do. But just put it on the friendly basis."

A moment later she read:

". . . . join me in this business. I make you this offer entirely from a friendly, and not from a financial, standpoint, hoping that you like me well enough to be associated with me."

"Anything else, Mr. Denham?"

"No. I think that covers the whole ground. It will look rather short, type-written, won't it? Perhaps you might add something to show that I shall be exceedingly disappointed if my offer is not accepted."

"No fear," said Miss Gale. "I'll add that, though. 'Yours truly,' or 'Yours very truly?'"

"You might end it 'Your friend.'"

The rapid click of the typewriter was heard for a few moments in the next room, and then Miss Gale came out with the completed letter in her hand.

"Shall I have the boy copy it?" she asked.

"Oh, bless you, no!" answered Mr. Denham, with evident trepidation.

The young woman said to herself, "He doesn't want Mr. Rogers to know, and no wonder. It is a most unbusiness-like proposal."

Then she said aloud, "Shall you want me again to-day?"

"No, Miss Gale; and thank you very much."

Next morning Miss Gale came into Mr. Denham's office with a smile on her face.

"You made a funny mistake last night, Mr. Denham," she said, as she took off her wraps.

"Did I?" he asked, in alarm.

"Yes. You sent that letter to my address. I got it this morning. I opened it, for I thought it was for me, and that, perhaps, you did not need me to-day. But I saw at once that you put it in the wrong envelope. Did you want me to-day?"

It was on his tongue to say, "I want you every day," but he merely held out his hand for the letter, and looked at it as if he could not account for its having gone astray.

The next day Miss Gale came late, and she looked frightened. It was evident that Denham was losing his mind. She put the letter down before him and said:

"You addressed that to me the second time, Mr. Denham."

There was a look of haggard anxiety about Denham that gave color to her suspicions. He felt that it was now or never.

"Then why don't you answer it, Miss Gale?" he said, gruffly.

She backed away from him.

"Answer it?" she repeated, faintly.

"Certainly. If I got a letter twice, I would answer it."

"What do you mean?" she cried, with her hand on the door-knob.

"Exactly what the letter says. I want you for my partner. I want to marry you, and—financial considerations——"

"Oh!" cried Miss Gale, in a long-drawn, quivering sigh. She was doubtless shocked at the word he had used, and fled to her type-writing room, closing the door behind her.

Richard Denham paced up and down the floor for a few moments, then rapped lightly at her door, but there was no response. He put on his hat and went out into the street. After a long and aimless walk, he found himself again at his place of business. When he went in, Rogers said to him:

"Miss Gale has left, sir."

"Has she?"

"Yes, and she has given notice. Says she is not coming back, sir."

"Very well."

He went into his own room and found a letter marked "personal" on his desk. He tore it open, and read in neatly type-written characters :

"I have resigned my place as typewriter girl, having been offered a better situation. I am offered a partnership in the house of Richard Denham. I have decided to accept the position, not so much on account of its financial attractions, as because I shall be glad, on a friendly basis, to be associated with the gentleman I have named. Why did you put me to all that worry writing that idiotic letter, when a few words would have saved ever so much bother? You evidently *need* a partner. My mother will be pleased to meet you any time you call. You have the address. Your friend,

"MARGARET GALE."

"Rogers!" shouted Denham, joyfully.

"Yes, sir," answered that estimable man, putting his head into the room.

"Advertise for another typewriter girl, Rogers."

"Yes, sir," said Rogers.







## THE ZEPHYR\*

BY COUNT ALFRED DE VERVINS

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EVERYBODY knows the story of Orpheus, and nobody believes it! I hold that everybody is wrong. If there is anything incredible in that story, it is that the son of Œagrus should have preferred death to the love of the Bacchantes, who were beautiful creatures, if we may believe the paintings which represent them. I believe firmly in the power of Orpheus's songs to charm beasts and even make the rocks weep; for I have seen the spell wrought by music on a larger scale than one sees every evening at the opera, and the thousand witnesses, brothers-in-arms of the modern Orpheus, whose history I am going to relate, could affirm the same thing.

In 1830, Hussein-Pasha, the Dey of Algeria, in an impatient manner, easily explained, perhaps, but decidedly blamable, slapped the face of our Chargé d'Affaires with his fly-flap. He was dethroned by France, who took possession of the provinces of Algeria, Constantine and Oran. Nothing could be more natural or more just! But twenty-five years later, in 1855, we had not yet been able to make the Kabyles understand it. They absurdly maintained that they were not responsible for the acts of the Bey; that if he had been a little hasty it was not their fault, and they did not see why their country should be invaded and a tax levied on their cattle; or that they should pay tribute, especially the tribute of blood, to assist the Christians against their own Mahommedan brothers under the fallacious pretext that Hussein-Pasha (whom the greater part of them had never seen) had struck M. Arago in

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the face with a small bunch of feathers—which really could not have hurt him very much !

But France maintained that behind the material fact were the consequences, behind the gesture was the insult, that her honor demanded her to kill a hundred thousand men on both sides and conquer Algeria, if it were only to teach good manners to these barbarians and compel them to pay tribute.



It was precisely this which the Kabyles would not understand, and this is why we set out for Constantine—ten thousand infantry, cavalry and artillery—with the intention, as charitable as civilized, of enlightening

them as to the reality of our rights and the superiority of our institutions. But if the Kabyles are dull of understanding, they have a quick eye and are prompt to act. If they were not our enemies, I should say that, while leading the simple life of pastoral people of olden times, they have retained their virtues, preserved the pride and courage of free men, and are formidable in combat when one dares attack them in their own mountains. We soon experienced this. Scarcely had we passed the Oued-Rummel, when the struggle began. For a month our march was only a succession of skirmishes and night attacks through the passes which furrowed this mountainous country, encounters in which we always lost more men than the enemy.

In the plain, we suffocated with the heat and died of thirst ; on the mountain, we froze and often had to open up a road through the snow. As soon as our columns separated, in order to pass a defile or a ravine, a discharge of musketry burst above our heads ; from every crevice in the rock came a shot ; the brushwood crackled under our feet. Our sharpshooters, the Zouaves, climbed the rocks to dislodge the Kabyles, but they bounded like chamois from crest to crest, returning the fire of our soldiers, whose bodies rolled from top to bottom of the ravine, almost under our horses' feet. Sometimes it was an Arab who fell in our midst, and expired crying, "There is one God." If he could not speak, he fixed on us a look, grave and menacing, raised his finger to make the supreme profession of faith, and his brave soul took its flight towards the one God whom he had just proclaimed.

We had been gone about a month from Constantine, advancing slowly, on account of the enormous convoy which followed us, the men almost exhausted by incessant skirmishes, and the general, anxious perhaps as to the result of the expedition, decidedly in a bad humor. The principal cause of delay in a march, which ought to have been as rapid as possible over the mountains, was a flock of five thousand sheep; therefore the General resolved to abandon them. In order that they might not say that he had lost them, he decided to leave them in charge of one of the Zephyrs. He chose a man from this corps, because he was convinced, as we all were, that the poor devil would be killed, and the sheep would be carried off as soon as we were gone. He preferred to sacrifice a Zephyr to a Grenadier or a Zouave.



The battalion of Zephyrs, whose real name is the African Battalion, is formed exclusively of scapegoats. It is not composed of robbers or murderers, but all the undisciplined or insubordinate of the army are sent to the Zephyrs, or "Joyfuls," as they call themselves. They are usually intelligent, and if it be true that a Zouave is as brave as one lion, it may be said that a Zephyr is as brave as two! In a profession where discipline and passive obedience are the first requirements of order and the essential conditions of success, these independent natures, indifferent to punishment, for which they often avenge themselves by a cutting witticism, are considered dangerous, so they are sent to the African Battalion. On account of their reputation for bravery, they are always placed in the front rank during any particularly dangerous engagement. Thus the hundred and twenty-three men who defended Mazagran for three days against an army of eight thousand Arabs, who were unable to gain possession of the village, were Zephyrs, commanded by Captain Lelièvre.

We were about to resume our march, after passing the night in

a valley covered with the long furze-like grass peculiar to this country, when the General called the Commander of the Zephyrs, and told him to appoint a man from his battalion to tend the sheep, which he had decided to leave in this spot until our return—in three months! “Give him,” he added, “an ample supply of biscuit, rice and coffee, and he can kill a sheep when he needs it; we will call for him on our way back.” I do not know whether there was irony in his remark, but I am loath to believe



it, for it would have been cruel! The Commandant could not repress a smile, but he made no observation, saluted and rejoined his battalion, which was awaiting the order to march.

He passed slowly in front of his troop, looking at each man as if asking on which the choice should fall, for he believed he was condemning to death the one he selected. At length he stopped and called “Fusilier Carette.” A boy of twenty-two or twenty-three years, tall but solidly built, with short nose, square chin, large forehead surmounted by light curly hair, mischievous blue eyes, and laughing mouth, stepped out of the ranks and replied “Present.” Halting in front of the officer, he presented arms and stood looking him full in the face. The latter delivered the General’s order, and in spite of the ordinary harshness of his manner, he could not entirely conceal a certain emotion which touched the soldier. When his comrades heard the order given, a murmur of insubordination ran from right to left of the company, and whispered protestations, which the officers feigned not to hear in order not to punish. They might have expected it! Carette, for numerous reasons, was greatly

beloved by all his companions. Among the "Joyfuls," Carette was the joyful *par excellence*. In his youth, which had been very varied, he had first been one of a troupe of mountebanks, then he had travelled with a dentist, and thanks to his wanderings with this charlatan, he had made a considerable collection of puns and jokes which had an enormous success in Africa. He also pretended to certain surgical knowledge, and his talent as a prestidigitator delighted the Zephyrs. Moreover, he had a fine voice and played the hautboy in a manner that the "Joyfuls" pronounced remarkable, especially when it constituted the orchestra at one of the soldiers' balls. In short, not one among all this undisciplined band was more unruly than Carette. His repartee, often clever, always saucy, enlivened the whole battalion, and when any farce was organized (and Heaven only knows what the farces of the Zephyrs are!) Carette was always the author or instigator. It was probably for all these reasons that the commander honored him with his choice.

When the column began its march more than one among these fearless men was moved when he abandoned this gay comrade, and each one wanted to shake his hand and say farewell in some form or other. "Good-by, Carette." "Good-by, old man." "You're a sharp fellow," said another, "but keep your eye open." "Have no fear," replied the poor boy, greatly touched by these proofs of sympathy, "you will find me here when you come back."

But when the last wagon had passed and the last man had disappeared in the ravine, when he found himself alone, surrounded only by the sheep, dreary thoughts began to assail him. He had a vague intuition of the grandeur and sacredness of duty and understood the necessity of discipline, that mystic bond which united all his companions in an invincible whole whilst he remained alone, isolated, probably lost for having discarded, like a heavy yoke, the necessary order and discipline.

But the "Joyful's" mind could not long remain occupied with serious thoughts, so, raising his head, he said with a smile, "Won't the others be surprised if they find me here with my sheep, when they come back? And the Commandant," said he, laughing heartily, "how astonished he will be." Then looking at the sheep scattered on the plain, grazing like Madame Deshoulière's lambs on the tranquil banks of the Linod, he added, "All the same, I shall be confoundedly bored here for three months." Suddenly a bright idea occurred to him; he would

train one of his pensioners and make a fearned sheep of him! For there was in Carette something of Gavroche and of Barnum, united to the carelessness of the Zephyr and to the manly confidence of the soldier in his arms and in his courage. Afterwards he busied himself in preparing a shelter for the night, which he tried to make as solid as possible, propping the *gourbi* (a hut made of branches and brushwood) against a rock, and strengthening it as well as he could with the materials at his disposal. This took some time. When he saw the sun sink in the horizon he made a tour of the little plain where he had been abandoned. Seeing nothing to make him anxious, his mind was at ease and he began to prepare his evening meal, whistling gayly.

The night had come—a calm night, silent and serene, such as one only sees in the desert; there was not a cloud in the sky, and the moon, which, on account of the purity and transparency of the atmosphere, appears larger and more brilliant than in any other part of the earth, seemed enthroned in the midst of a host of stars, also more numerous and brighter than elsewhere. Obedient to an instinct common to all domestic animals, the sheep collected for the night around their shepherd.



They covered the plain for a great distance towards the east. At the west of the rock against which the Zephyr had erected his *gourbi*, was a ravine, not very large in that spot, but deepen-

ing towards the north and south. At the north it disappeared between slopes covered with cactus, roses and Barbary fig-trees, whose interlacing branches offered to the reptiles and animals of that region haunts impenetrable to man. At the south the ravine bordered upon a valley, in which was established the *Douar* or Arab village, which had furnished our latest aggressors.

The poor soldier, ignorant of the existence of these redoubtable spots, hearing no sound, seated himself on a rock and began to dream.

It will be impossible to enumerate all the memories which his thoughts evoked, some touching, even poetical, others simply gay or guilty, but all full of charm to him at that hour, and in such circumstances. After a hasty look on his past, a look which embraced his childhood, his wanderings and his success as a mountebank, his escapades, his love affairs, he began to think of the severity of his chiefs, of the council of war—which had sent him to the African Battalion, of his popularity among his comrades, and finally of his present situation. The result of all this retrospection was a melancholy look addressed to heaven, and these few words: "It doesn't matter, but it would be strange to die on such a beautiful night." With a versatility peculiar to these badly balanced brains, he struck the ground with the butt end of his gun and cried, almost gayly, "Bah! I have my *flingot* (gun) and my cartridges, everything is quiet and it will be light to-morrow." In order to drive away the ideas that saddened him and weakened his courage, he took his hautboy and prepared to give a little concert.

However, he was mistaken; everything *seemed* quiet, but there is for every man a night without a morrow, that of death, and it seemed to have come for the poor Zephyr, for two enemies, equally formidable, the lion and the Kabyles were advancing silently in the shadow.

The king of the mountain, whom the Arabs call "Said," had just awakened in his den, his eyelids still heavy with the day's sleep; he had had a long yawn, lazily stretched himself, rose and went to the entrance of the cavern to inhale the air, as if to ask on which side he should direct his steps. He was not one of those lions, long-legged and bald like those of Cape Colony, or slight and angular like the American puma, which seems no more formidable than an ordinary mastiff. He was a real lion of the Atlas, whose imposing and terrible aspect was calculated to

weaken the stoutest courage. He moved without haste, his head high, his step free and sure, scenting without hesitation or fear every obstacle on his path, exploring with a tranquil air the shadows cast by the rocks, bounding with grace over the chasms which opened before him. When he reached the summit of a hill, or one of those escarpments which the moon inundated with her rays, his grand silhouette animated and filled the landscape. On arriving at the entrance of the ravine he stopped, took breath and, with the same majestic and quiet step, turned towards the Zephyr's encampment.

The rock upon which the soldier was seated did not rise more than fifteen feet above the bottom of the ravine, so that with a single bound the lion could have reached the top. He came steadily on in the shadow thrown by the little eminence, raised his head to measure the height, crouched as if ready to spring—but, instead of doing so, straightened himself again and seemed to listen.

The sheep, not very intelligent as every one knows, reassured, as men often are, by numbers, slept quietly, suspecting no more



than their guardian the approach of the enemy. The Zephyr at this precise moment was playing the most joyous waltz in his repertory; he displayed in its execution a sentiment, a sweetness



of tone which ought to have charmed the king of the mountain. Perhaps he was not very hungry just then, unless the proverb which says "Hungry stomach has no ears" be false. However that may be, after two or three movements betraying great uncertainty, the terrible beast ended by lying down at the foot of the hillock, supported his great head on his outstretched paws, and, with half-closed lids, seemed to listen—which proves that the story of Orpheus is not a fable.

Now the abandonment of the sheep was known to the neighboring douar. Its inhabitants, supposing that the infidels had left a guard, or a number of soldiers sufficient to defend the flock, decided to await the night to reconnoitre. As all the warriors or men from the "great tents" were away, the old Caïd, who commanded the tribe in the absence of the Sheik, thought it best to do this. At the hour when the lion left his den, ten men, the Caïd and a young boy, almost a child, son of the Sheik, also left the douar, and marched in silence towards the plain, hoping to surprise the Christians and carry off their cattle. Being ignorant of the number of the enemy they were to encounter, the Caïd recommended his men to advance with great caution, either that the surprise might be complete, or, in case it seemed best not to attack, that they might retire without raising the infidels' attention.

They approached noiselessly, arms in readiness, finger on the trigger, with the Roumi (the Sheik's son) some steps in advance, for even in the desert "*noblesse oblige*." His old kinsman, the Caïd, was proud of the child's courage and followed his every movement with a look in which could be read mingled solicitude and admiration.

They were nearing the end of their expedition when the lion, who scented their approach before seeing them, opened his large eyes, knitted his brows and rose. A hyena would have fled like a coward, a panther would have lain in ambush to surprise them later, but the lion advanced proudly to the middle of the ravine. He sniffed at the earth, then with swinging tail, which swept the ground from side to side, with bristling mane and sparkling eyes, majestic and terrible, he paused.

It was at this moment that the Zephyr saw him. The hautboy, from which he lately drew such sweet sounds, slipped from his hand and for half a minute he remained petrified with stupor; but soon recovering his presence of mind and his courage, he seized his gun, cocked it, and took aim. He was just about to fire

when a noise, which he could not explain at first, prevented him. Almost at the same instant he heard a voice with an accent of profoundest terror cry "Caïd." It was the Roumi, who had just perceived the lion. Seized with the horrible fear which that animal always produces on the Arab, he turned and ran towards his companion. All saw him then; the Caïd forgetting the Christians whom he had come to surprise, commanded "Fire." Ten musket shots rang out in the night, lighting up the ravine, but the lion remained standing. He gave a roar which was echoed like thunder on every side of the mountain, then with one



prodigious bound he fell on the Sheik's son. The lion was holding the Roumi under his heavy paw, his claws were digging into his flesh, whilst with open mouth, panting breath, his eyes blazing with ferocity, he seemed ready to devour him. It was at this moment that Carette fired. The noble beast, struck in the temple, gave a second roar, but it was only a death-rattle this time, and he fell to rise no more. Meanwhile, not knowing that he was dead, the soldier jumped into the ravine and advanced bravely to the ferocious beast, whilst the Arabs, in spite of their incontestable courage, rested on the defensive, not daring to approach to dispatch the lion, or to raise their young comrade. It was the Zephyr that lifted him and placed him upon a rock. I have said that Carette had travelled with a charlatan and pretended to certain medical knowledge. If his pretensions were not fully justified they were in a measure; his master taking about with him a skeleton and some anatomical plates, which he exhibited to the public. His pupil had often examined them; and he had in addition a lightness of touch, a dexterity acquired in prestidigitation during another phase of his adventurous youth.

This explains how he staunched the blood, bandaged the wounds, and tended the Roumi with a skill which gave the Arabs an exalted idea of his talents.

When his nephew came to himself, the Caïd, who until then had not spoken, went up to Carette and thanked him without much effusion, but in the grave tones peculiar to the men of the mountains, which, if it is less expressive, is always more sincere than the loquacity of the Greeks. The Zephyr, who spoke a little Arabic, like most soldiers who have passed some time in Africa, expressed to the Caïd his desire to live on good terms with them in so earnest a tone, that his new friends could not doubt his sincerity. From that day he was, so to speak, adopted by the tribe of Beni-Hammers, and almost lived with them. The sheep were guarded by the men belonging to the *ḍouar*, to which the Zephyr had rendered a service. During this time Carette tended the sick, played on the hautboy, ate hot dishes, swallowed yatagans and juggled for everybody.

As he did not kill many more patients than our qualified doctors, and as his hautboy and his sleight-of-hand tricks had still more success with the Beni-Hammers than with the Zephyrs, his popularity became so great with these simple people that they often wondered what was to become of them when the stranger went away. In order not to grieve my readers, I will not speak of the young girls; I will merely say that the waters of the spring, from which they filled their pitchers, preserved for a long time a peculiar taste on account of the tears they shed when speaking of the departure of the "Joyful."



Four months later we returned to the plain where we had abandoned the sheep. The expedition had been gone longer than we at first supposed, but it had ended happily. Kabylia was subdued; the Douars had surrendered; the tribute had been discharged, and the Kabyles, who had received us with musket shots at the beginning of the campaign, returned in our ranks, deserting as they neared their own villages.

When the advance-guard emerged from the mountains on to the plain and saw it covered with sheep, browsing quietly, a great cry arose, and the news spread with the rapidity of a telegram from head to foot of the column. "Carette and the sheep! The sheep and the Zephyr! Impossible! But, look, there they are!" These phrases, and others like them, were repeated from left to right of our little army, and reached the General, who, not finding it credible, put his horse to a gallop, in order to confirm such a miracle with his own eyes. The Zephyrs, more interested than anybody in the matter, as it was to them an affair of honor, raised a "hurrah," and broke into a run. At last we had to yield to ocular evidence. The sheep were there, and Carette, leaning on his gun, smiling, but with something grave in his eyes, waited our arrival with dignity.

Then the drums beat, the bands played their gayest airs, and for an hour the brave Zephyr was the object of a veritable ovation.

Here, perhaps, I ought to end this episode, of which I can attest the truth, being an eye-witness, but I am a conscientious writer, and believe I shall satisfy my readers more by telling them what eventually became of Carette. If he had not belonged to the African Battalion it is probable that he would have been decorated, but his artistic antecedents forbade his having that distinction, at least so thought the General, who gave him, instead, a hundred francs. On their side, the Beni-Hammers had prepared the lion's skin, as they know how to do it in the desert, and when we entered Constantine, Carette found himself rich. He sold the skin for three hundred francs; as soon as he was in possession of that sum, he took a "stretch" (illegal absence) of three days with two comrades. This escapade cost him what the regiment calls "eleven and four," that is eleven days in prison and four in the black hole.

"Sic transit gloria mundi."

I met him precisely at the moment when they were taking him to the "carcere duro," and the interest I felt in him prompted me to remonstrate with him on the past. "Bah," he replied, "if, instead of giving me a hundred francs, the General had given me a handshake, it might perhaps have made me reflect—but, no, he gave me the money—what could I do with it? Buy a house?" he shrugged his shoulders. "It was to have a spree with, wasn't it? That's what I did, and now they lock me up! Ah, well; it is not just! Because, you see, the General never

would have got clear, as I did, with five thousand sheep on his hands, and a lion, and all the Bedouins—men and women. I would like to have seen him in my place!" He gave another shrug showing his disdain for the General, after which he went off with the corporal to remain under lock and key for fifteen days. . . .

Ten years later I had left the army, and settled in the country. One day, hearing a lively altercation outside the grating, I opened the window to find out the cause. It was my servant, opposing, most energetically, the entrance of a man, an ass, a woman, and a little girl. The man seemed determined to enter, in spite of all remonstrances. I recognized him at once by his sly air, his blue eyes and curly hair. It was Carette! I confess that I was pleased to see him again, not only for himself, but for all the memories evoked by his presence. I called to the servant to let him in, and ran out to meet him. The ass and the indescribable baggage which he carried, were put in the stable, and I made Carette and his family come into the dining-room. Then he told me that he was married, and that he travelled in turn as musician, dentist, and prestidigitator; that, thanks to his triple industry, he lived well, and was content with his lot. "But, all the same," he added, with a sigh of regret, "I have never had, and never shall have, such a good time as during the four months I spent with the Beni-Hammers."





## MY NEIGHBOR \*

BY MAE S. THYNG

A FATIGUING journey up six long, winding flights of stairs carried me to the door of the room I occupied in — Street; but no matter for the name of the street, no one, I am confident, will visit London for the express purpose of satisfying himself that I am to be depended upon, and that there is a house of so many stories in Lambert Street. Here I lived, in enjoyment of no end of fresh air, especially in winter, and a brilliant prospect up and down the street and over the roofs of the houses across the way.

I was studying painting at that time,—learning to paint the landscapes and figure-pieces which I produce with so much ease and dispose of with so much difficulty.

At the head of the last flight of stairs in my lodging-house was a narrow passage-way in which I was obliged to stop and recover my breath, after finishing the one hundred and thirty-nine steps that led to my paradise, before I could get my key into its lock; and into this passage-way opened two doors, one of which, of course, belonged to my room, and the other to some one else's. But who this some one else was, I was unable to find out. Was it a man or woman? I was persuaded it must be a woman, and as a woman I always used to think of her and speak of her to myself—and I thought and spoke of her often enough.

Of course, I could have settled the question at once by knocking at her door and asking for a match, or by inquiring of my landlord who occasionally honored me with a friendly call, but I scorned resorting to such methods.

Every time I heard her door shut I resolved she should not go out again without my seeing her, and I nearly fell into the street as I frantically attempted to reach far enough out of my window to see her as she came out at the street-door.

Was she young, and pretty, and good? What did she do? and what was her name? My thoughts were perpetually run-

\* Written for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

ning up those six flights and stopping baffled at her close-shut door.

I drew ideal portraits of her in my idle moments, introduced them into all my pictures, and would often finish out an accidental face in a study of rocks, much to my instructor's surprise and my fellow-students' amusement.

The only communication I ever had with people in the house, was an occasional conversation with the dust-colored old woman who cleaned the windows and swept the halls.

A day came for cleaning my windows when it rained heavily, and I could not give the old woman a clear stage by going out for a couple of hours, but told her to clean away and be as lively as she could, while I sat there and painted.

Lodgers, she told me, as she polished up the panes, came and went so fast that she forgot one when another came, and never knew any of their names.

She had an eye for character, though, and told me the peculiarities of some of them in a quaint way, nailing her sentences, now and then, with odd hard words, independently of the general text.

"Gentleman who's under you keeps 'imself quite to 'imself," she said. "Plants out queer sasses in boxes all the time an' some of 'em on the balcony itself. P'r'aps 'e makes a kinder tea of 'em, or root-drink. Decoctifies."

"And who is in the room below that?" I inquired, more to make her talk than to satisfy any curiosity I had on the subject.

"Empty now. Two dark little gentlemen 'ad it for a fortnight—Jews, I fancy—an' as like one another as two spots o' dirt on this 'ere pane o' glass. Spoke a hard-biled kind o' tongue an' was furriners, most likely Polyanders."

I might have asked her about my next-door neighbor, but refrained for fear my pretty romance would be destroyed by a description of a middle-aged spinster who wore glasses and wrought green roses in crewel-work.

When she had finished the windows and gathered up her brushes and pails, she paused an instant to give a backward glance at her completed task. The sun had broken through the clouds and rested tenderly on the stooping figure of the old woman in her faded rags.

"What a picture?" I thought, involuntarily; then aloud, I said: "Will you come some time and let me paint you, Maggie?"

"Me!" she cried, startled.

"Yes, just as you are now, scrubbing-brushes and all. Will you come," I cried, my enthusiasm rising.

"Law! Why d'ye want to paint an old woman like me, Mister Carroll, with a face wrinkled like a peach-pit? Why don't you paint a pretty girl? Old women are painted though sometimes, but only to make 'emselves look young agen. Ha, ha!"

It was useless to argue the point with her, so I only said:

"Yes, but I want you, Maggie. Will you come?"

"Law, if ye really want'er 'ave me, I'll come, sir, 'cause you've been very good ter old Maggie."

The sittings began the next day, and I derived much amusement from the old woman's conversation, while I painted away with might and main, resolved that this picture should be hung at the Salon next Spring; and my imagination even went so far as to speculate on the most suitable style of frame.

At first it was only of the other lodgers that old Maggie gossiped, but one day, when she was looking very tired, I questioned her kindly about herself, and she finally told me her story.

The old woman had evidently taken a great fancy to me, and I wish I could remember the quaint words in which she told me of her girlhood in London, and her courtship by a man, poor like herself, though much above her in station—a newspaper writer, she said he was.

"When we were first married, we took a little country 'ouse that made me think of a biled dinner, for 'twas painted in red, an' green, an' deep yellor—jest like that paint you'r' mixin' up now—carrotty. Then the baby came."

Her whole voice and manner changed, and during the rest of the story she dropped the abrupt witticisms for a tremulous eagerness.

"Did ye know I 'ad a son, Mister Carroll?"

"No," I answered, intent on my work; "where is he now?"

"'E's a rich man now, an' a gentleman," she said, proudly, and yet with a wistfulness that made me glance quickly at her face.

If I could only get that expression, I thought; and went to work with perfect frenzy on the face.

"How is it that you are not a fine lady then, Maggie," I asked.

"That's what 'e'd make me—*me*, d'ye 'ear? who's scrubbed floors for thirty year! But I'd only shame 'im, an' folks 'd say, 'Dear, dear, an' d'ye know 'is mother is a charwoman!' An' then 'e'd only be ashamed o' me. No, no, no, I couldn't stand that, an' I tol' 'im so."



There was an awkward pause, in which I could think of nothing to say to the poor thing, so glanced at her compassionately, and thoughtfully mixed some sepia on my palette.

"Ye see, sir, 'twas this way," Maggie went on, after a while. "After Joe died we 'ad nothin'—not a ha'penny to buy bread, so I sent the boy to the 'ome for poor children, an' began scrubbin' floors. It was 'ard to let Dick go, but I tried not to sorrer over it, for I knew I couldn't keep 'im. I didn't see 'im for quite a while then, not till 'e was five year, for they wouldn't let visitors in on Sunday, an' I was workin' all the other days.

"I went up there with my scrubbin' things an' all one night, for I'd jest come from my work, an' 'e didn't know me, sir! 'E ran away an' 'id when I tried to kiss 'im. Well, after that I went up whenever I could get away after my work was done at night, though I was awful tired, an' 'e got kinder uster me, an' liked to build tents by puttin' up my broom an' mops an' wrappin' my shawl round 'em. 'E uster call my mop 'Doctor,' 'cause 'e said the end was like Doctor Dick's whiskers. Doctor Dick was the reg'lar doctor at the 'ome, an' 'e'd took a shine to my little Dick.

"One day, I was washin' windows in an office on Turner Street, an' in walks Doctor Dick. Well, we 'ad a talk an' the end of it was 'e took my Dick to fetch up for 'is son. 'E was a nice, kind gentleman, an' I knew he thought a sight o' Dick, but it was 'ard for me, for I 'ad to promise not to see Dick after 'e left the 'ome. But I'd no money to fetch 'im up on, an' Doctor Dick 'd make 'im a gentleman, an' I couldn't stand in the boy's way; 'e'd soon forget me, though it nearly killed me when I thought of it.

"That must a-been near thirty year ago, but somethin' hurts 'ere," touching her heart, "when I think of the day I said good-by."

There was another pause in which I painted furiously.

"What day 's to-day? The thirteenth, isn't it? Well, 'twas just five years ago that Dick found me out, an' I was still scrubbin'. I didn't seem to 'ave no 'art to get anything better to do after I let Dick go. What was the use?

"Doctor Dick was dead, an' 'ad left my Dick lots o' money an' a letter that told 'im all about me; so 'e'd come to look me up, an' take me to live with 'im. 'E was good, but awful cold an' still-like, an' wore kid gloves an' finer close nor Joe ever 'ad. But I aught not 'er say that, for 'e allers is very good to me, jest

as if I was a lady; but you see 'e was different, an' I never could love 'im like little Dick.

"So I told 'im 'e must leave me where I was, for I couldn't be 'appy in a big 'ouse with fine close, an' would only shame 'im before folks. An old woman like me. I was too old to change; I'd scrubbed all my life, an' was goin' to scrub to the end. An' said I, 'ye mustn't come to see me on week-days when I'm workin' either, 'cause 'twouldn't do no good, an' folks 'd only wonder.'

"'E got a little mad at that, but I fancy he was kinder glad way down. I said 'e could come on Sundays, an' we'd spend that day together if 'e wanted to."

"So now 'e comes every Sunday, an' takes me to church, an' I rig out in the fine shawl an' bunnit an' things 'e keeps givin' me, and try to be like a great rich lady.

"It's kinder hard sometimes to think 'e's really my boy, for 'e don't talk like me or seem to belong to me some'ow; but I s'pose it's all right, an' 'e's a real fine gentleman is Dick," she finished with pride, which poorly concealed the aching mother-heart beneath.

"Poor Maggie," I said, softly, under my breath.

"Why do you say that?" she cried, almost fiercely. "I ain't sorry 'bout anything, an' Dick 's as good to me as 'e can be. Mighty few women 's got such a son, I reckon!"

After that we neither spoke till the clock struck six, and I stepped back to view my work.

It was truly the best thing I had ever done, and another hour's work would have finished it, but the light was going fast, so I began to put away my paints and brushes, and Maggie gathered up her things to leave.

"I wish there was something I could do for you," said I, as I slipped a coin into the old woman's hard palm. I felt more sympathetic now that my work was done, and her story seemed to mean more to me than when I was wondering whether to use gray or brown for her faded eyes.

Her face brightened at the words.

"Sometime," she faltered, slowly, "if you could paint Dick—jest a little thing for me——"

"Gladly," I answered; "but when and where can I see him?"

"Why, 'e——" she stopped. "Sometime, p'haps, you'll see my Dick, an' I 'ope you'll like 'im. I should like to 'ave you know my son, Mister Carroll. Good-night, sir."

And she was gone.

I had just got back from dinner, when there was a knock at my door, and Doctor Davis came in unceremoniously. I was used to having him drop in about that time in the day, and rather enjoyed a chat with my gentlemanly landlord, for, though outwardly grave, almost to sadness, he displayed at times a grim humor that was vastly entertaining, and was, moreover, a man of education and refined tastes. He rarely spoke of himself and kept his cloak of reserve well buttoned up to his chin,—sometimes I even thought he turned the collar up to ward off all personal questions. But I knew him to be a physician with a limited practice, and a fine house up on G—— Street, besides the row of lodging-houses from 115 to 121 West Lambert Street.

“How are you, Davis?” I said, without changing my position.

“As well as this beastly weather permits anyone to be,” he replied, taking the only vacant chair. “The fog is so thick outside you could drill holes in it and blast it with gunpowder.” But his attention was attracted just then to my easel.

“What’s this?” he cried, and moved the lamp to get a better view.

I had my back to him, so, after a long silence, I wheeled around to say, rather impatiently I fear, as I did not understand his hesitation :

“Well, how do you like it?”

“It’s truly fine, Carroll. I never dreamed you would do anything like this. Why, my dear fellow, your reputation will be made.”

I felt very much gratified, for Davis was something of a critic and his opinion worth having, but it wouldn’t be manly for me to show my pleasure, so I only said, indifferently :

“You think it will go, then?”

“Go! Now look here, Carroll, I want this. Name your own price, but I must have it.”

“You’ve seen Maggie, of course, haven’t you—the old woman who cleans the halls here?”

“Yes, often,” he answered, slowly.

“Do you think it is like her?”

“Very like—and yet—older and sadder-looking someway. Don’t you think so?”

“No. She looked just like that to-day. She’s to pose again to-morrow, for, as you see, it’s not quite done yet. This hand needs touching and the dress should be worked up a little more.”

"Yes, but I wouldn't touch it if I were you. It's just perfect now, and you might do too much, you know."

"Nonsense," I said, rather vexed at his tone.

"I must go along now," he said, buttoning up his coat. "I've some business in the next house—119."

I noticed for the first time that he looked ill, and tried to make him take some brandy before he went out, but he seemed in a hurry and couldn't stop.

"Good-by," he said, "and remember the picture is mine."

It was a hot, clammy night, and after Davis left I threw the windows open as far as they were made to be thrown, and got as far out of one of them as I safely could, by tilting my chair back, and extending my legs out into that undefined everywhere called the wide, wide world.

So Davis had bought my picture and I was to name the price. Well, he was a rich man, I thought complacently, and my price grew in size the longer I thought about it. It did not occur to me that a receipted bill for three months rent, due last week, might be justly considered as a part payment. I would make the sum large enough to cover my expenses to Paris and back next summer; and then——

I was startled by hearing the door to the next room shut gently. I had not indulged in many dreams of my fair neighbor lately; in fact, my new interest in art had locked the door on my curiosity, and somehow now I cared little about finding the key.

I nearly jumped out of my chair, however, when I heard a distinct groan from the next room; and, as I sprang to my feet, there was the sound of a heavy fall. I rushed into the hall. This was no time for knocking, and I swiftly turned the handle of the door which had so baffled me in my desire to know more of the occupant of the room behind it.

The room was totally dark.

"What's the matter? Can I be of any assistance?" I called, peering into the blackness.

There was no reply, and I brought the lamp from my room, and held it high above my head, giving a hasty glance around as I did so.

The room was larger than mine and handsomely furnished, evidently by a person of taste, I had time to think to myself before my eyes fell on a dark figure lying, face downwards, on the floor beside the table.

I quickly put the lamp down, lifted her gently on to the bed and bent over her to see if she were conscious.

To my surprise it was old Maggie, and she was quite, quite dead!

I was so stunned that I could not think for a minute. Then I went out, closed the door softly and reverently, and ran downstairs.

So this was my neighbor, and I never knew!

On the second floor I met one of the housemaids carrying a lamp, which I took out of her hands.

"Go quickly," said I, "to 119, and tell Doctor Davis that Maggie is dead."

The girl looked frightened, but obeyed without a word.

Then I suddenly thought of her son—Dick, she called him. He must know. I was about to go in search of some one else when I met Davis on the landing in the dimly-lighted hall.

"Davis," said I, "we must send for her son. Do you know where he lives?"

I could see even in the semi-darkness that his face was working convulsively, but without answering he strode on to Maggie's room, I following.

Two of the maids were in the room now, one of them weeping noisily, for Maggie had been kind to her last winter when she was ill.

But Davis did not notice them. He went quickly over to the bed, dropped on his knees by its side, and taking the poor, stiff, wrinkled hands in his, he covered them with kisses.

When he rose and turned toward me, I saw the great tears rolling down his face.

"Carroll," he said, gently, "leave us together. Her son is here."



## THE PHILOSOPHER'S BABY\*



HAD been considering for about a year whether I should marry Winifred Hanway, when I heard that she was engaged to the Philosopher.

Why did she accept him? True, he is both imaginative and critical; but faculties exercised in the formation of psychological hypotheses and the laborious destruction of those of one's neighbor do not usually rouse the sympathy of a bright and beautiful girl, who is more fit to live than to think about life.

He is certainly handsome, but as certainly his clothes are barbarous. His trousers cannot keep their shape for a day, and his hats are never new. If he notices the rain, he opens an umbrella which might have served as an ineffectual protection at the time of the Deluge; if he finds out that it is cold, he assumes a garment which might have been the every-day coat of Methuselah. In short, though he is a true friend, he is an uncomfortable acquaintance; and his volcanic utterances, after long periods of calm contemplation, cause such shocks to one's nerves as would be conveyed to the Sunday citizen by the eruption of Beacon Hill.

But if it was odd that the beautiful Winifred Hanway should marry my friend, it was yet more odd that he should marry any one, for there was no topic more certain to excite an explosion in the Philosopher than the excessive population of the country and the wholesome solitude of the Thinker.

"How," he would fiercely ask, "can a man think effectually on fundamental subjects, who is compelled by the despicable circumstances of his life, to exhaust his analytical faculty in considering how to pay his butcher and when to buy his coal? I tell you, sir, it's better to starve with cold and hunger than to debase one's noblest part to a game of skill with a grasping grocer."

Again and again I had heard him declaim in this preposterous fashion; and, after all, he was going to the altar like any other

\* A selection from "Blackwood's Magazine."

victim, and would doubtless take a house upon his back with the docility of a snail.

I could not solve the problem; I would not give it up. So, full of the determination to drag Diogenes out of his tub, and the secret out of Diogenes, I stepped round the corner to offer my congratulations. My friend was in his study, *apparently* writing. He rose at me with a rush, wrung my hand till it ached, and blushed rather uncomfortably. Still it was evident that the Philosopher had something ready to say, and was nervously anxious to say it. Indeed I had hardly said more than, "My dear fellow, I don't know when . . . I really am so awfully glad I . . . it's in every way so, such a satisfactory, you know. . . . I really do wish all possible, and all that sort of thing you know"—when he burst in with a speech so fluently delivered that I knew I was not his earliest visitor that morning.

"Of course it's taken you by surprise," he said, "as I knew it would; but the truth is, that I have been thinking of it for a long time, and I am sure I am right."

Here I tried to get in an expression of wonder at this new notion of duty, but he was bent on being rid of the matter, and hurried on to his reasons.

"In the first place," said he, "I am sure that, instead of increasing my domestic worries, my marriage will transfer them in a body to my wife; and secondly, when I consider the vast number of fools who are every day born into the world, I am terrified by the picture of what the next generation will be if the thinkers of this are to be without successors."

Having discharged his reasons in this wise, the orator stood blinking at me as if he feared dissent, but I was too astounded by his magnificent audacity to reply. Slowly a look of peace stole back into his face, a pleasant light dawned in his eyes, and the promise of a smile at the corner of his mouth. His remarkable fluency was gone, and, indeed, his voice sounded quite choky when he said, "Johnny, you don't know what an angel she is."

A light broke in upon me. "Philosopher," I said, "I believe you are going to be married because you fell in love!"

"Perhaps you are right," said the Philosopher.

After the wedding the Philosopher and his wife went to Europe for an indefinite period, and their Boston friends heard but little of them. He wrote to nobody, and she did not write to me.

Yet there were occasional rumors. Now they were breathing the keen air of the Engadine; now he was lashing himself to frenzy over the treasures of Rome; now she was gazing with her sweet eyes across the glowing splendor of the Bay of Naples. Then they were in Germany and about to settle for life in a university town, but anon had fled from it in haste after a long night's dispute, in the course of which my learned friend had well-nigh come to blows with the university's most celebrated professor.

At last I heard that they were home again and, full of enthusiasm, darted round the corner to welcome them back. Nobody was with them but Mrs. Hanway, Winifred's mother. I would enter unannounced and surprise the Philosopher. I entered unannounced and was surprised myself.

Was this the effect of matrimony or of foreign travel? Each occupant of the room was engaged in an exercise wholly unconnected, as it seemed, with the rest. My friend's wife, the lady whom I had almost loved, queen of all grace and comeliness, was appearing and disappearing like a flash behind the morning paper, showing at the moments of disclosure a face flushed with excitement, and lustrous coils of hair tumbled into the wildest disorder, while she accompanied the whole performance with strange and inarticulate sounds.

Her mother, the same Mrs. Hanway, who was so perfect a model of dress and carriage that many of her lady friends were wont to lament among themselves that she gave herself such airs, was seated on the floor dressed for walking, but without her bonnet. Yes, she was certainly drumming on an inverted teatray, with the wrong end of the poker.

And the Philosopher? It was perplexing, after three year's separation, to meet him thus. The Philosopher was cantering round the room on all fours, wearing on his head his own wastebasket. Briskly he cantered round, ever and anon frisking like a lamb in springtime, until he reached my feet, which were rooted to the spot with astonishment. He glanced up sidewise, rose with a cry to the normal attitude of man, and grasped me by the hand.

At the sound of his voice, his wife dropping the paper from her hands, raised them quickly to her hair; and his mother-in-law, with as much dignity as the effort would allow, scrambled on to her feet. Then in an instant the cause of their eccentric conduct was made clear. Throned upon the hearthrug, and



showing by a gracious smile a few of the newest teeth, sat a fine baby of some fifteen months. In one dimpled fist was tightly clinched the brush, which had so neatly arranged the mother's braids; while the other was engaged in pounding the grandmother's best bonnet into a shapeless mass.

We were all somewhat embarrassed, except the baby. The ladies knew that they were untidy, and I that I was an intruder. As for the learned father, he stood now on one leg and now on the other, while he shifted the waste-paper basket from hand to hand, and continued to smile almost as perseveringly as his amiable offspring. Yet it was he who at last put an end to our awkward position, by expressing a wild desire to have my opinion of the new curtains in his study.

Rather sheepishly I said good-by to the lady of the house, trying to express by my eyes that I would never call again unannounced. I knew that Mrs. Hanway had not forgiven me, as I humbly took the two fingers which she offered; and I felt like a brute, as the most important member of the family condescended to leave a damp spot by the edge of my left whisker.

When, however, I had been swept down-stairs by my impulsive friend, and was alone with him in his den, my courage returned, and with it some indignation. I confronted him, and sternly asked him why I had not been told that he was a father.

"Not been told?" echoed he; "do you mean to say that you did not know about the baby?"

"Not so much as that it was," I replied, gloomily.

He was overwhelmed; of course he had supposed that every one knew it—of course fifty people ought to have told me, who, of course, had told me everything else. At last my curiosity got the better of my indignation, and I cut short his apologies by beginning my questions.

"Does the shape of his head content you?" I asked.

"The shape of whose *what?*" cried the philosopher, apparently too surprised for grammar.

"Of the baby's head, of course," I replied, tartly; "I merely wished to know if the child was likely to be as intellectual as you hoped."

"Isn't the hair lovely?" he asked, inconsequently.

This was too much, and assuming my severest manner I delivered myself in this wise: "I thought, though no doubt I was wrong, that the use of a baby to you would be partly to furnish you with raw material for a philosopher, partly to enable

you by constant observation to gain further evidence bearing on such vexed questions as, whether the infant gains its ideas of space by feeling about, whether it is conscious of itself," etc.

"Well," he said, laughing, "I don't expect much help from my infant in those matters, unless I can get inside her and think her thoughts."

"Her thoughts?" cried I, in amazement; "you don't mean to say it's a girl? Good gracious! you are not going to educate a female philosopher?"

He looked rather vexed.

"Of course it's a girl," he said.

"The father of a female philosopher!" I gasped.

"Dear me!" said he, somewhat testily, "isn't it enough to be father of a noble woman?"

Now, I have often put up with a great deal from my learned friend; but there is a turning-point even for the worm, and nobody will sit for ever at the feet which are constantly kicking him. I had been snubbed more than enough by this illogical parent, and assuming my most sarcastic manner, I inquired, with an appearance of deference, "Is it not rather early to speak of your daughter as a noble woman?"

"Not at all," said the philosopher.

I had kept aloof from the Philosopher for some weeks, nursing my wrath, like Achilles I said to myself—cross as a bear, I overheard my landlady say in the passage—when I received a hasty note begging me to come to him at once. I fancied myself summoned to a council of chiefs; so, having donned my shining armor, I left my tent with fitting dignity and descended with a clang into the plain.

As usual, silence held my friend's house that morning. The door was opened, before I had time to ring, by a melancholy footman, who noiselessly ushered me into the study. It was again my lot to be again rooted to the spot with amazement. By the book-case, in a shaded corner of the room, with his head bowed low upon his hands, knelt the Philosopher.

Here was a long step from the siege of Troy—from the simple wrath of a child-like hero to the most complex embarrassment of an heir of all the ages. What should I do? The dismal menial had fled to the shades, without a word, without even a glance into the room. If I retreated I left my friend unaided and remained ignorant of the cause of his strange conduct. If

I advanced, I was again the intruder on a scene not prepared for my inspection.

In an agony of hesitation I fell to brushing my hat with my elbow; but not finding the expected relief in the occupation, I was about to desist when my hat decided what my head could not, by falling with a crack on the floor.

The effect was electrical. Without one glance at the intruder, the Philosopher made a grab at the nearest book-shelf, dragging out a volume which had not been touched for half a century, and hunted for nothing in its pages with frantic eagerness. He was still at it when I stood over him and noted without wonder that he held the book upside down; then, with the poorest imitation of surprise which I have ever seen, he rose and grasped my hand.

"You found me on the track of something," he said; "I was looking it out in—in—"

Here it occurred to him that he did not know the name of the venerable tome which he had so rudely disturbed; and with a heightened color and a sudden change of manner he turned quickly to me and said, "My child is ill."

I felt positively guilty. I had been angry with that baby for making my wise friend foolish, for not being a boy, for being called "a noble woman." Was it not shameful that a great hulking brute should sneer at a weak thing that could not even answer with a taunt? Were not my clumsy sarcasms enough to crush so delicate a plant? The poor little "noble woman" was in danger, and I could do nothing to help her. There were tears in the eyes which were looking into mine for comfort; but I had nothing ready to say.

"I could not stand being alone," he muttered, after a short silence; "the doctor is with her now, and in a moment I may hear that my little daughter must—in fact, may hear the worst."

While he was speaking, I seemed to have fifty consoling remarks to offer; but when he stopped, no one sentence would disengage itself from the rest. What I blurted out at last seems almost ridiculous as I look back on it.

"You must hope for the best," I said; "you know she has youth on her side."

The words were scarcely out of my mouth, when I heard a measured step upon the stairs; presently the door was opened by the noiseless footman, and the most famous of Trimountain doctors entered the room. My friend leaned heavily on my arm, but looked at the man of science with seeming calm.

"I am happy to say," said the physician, cheerily, "that our little friend is going on as well as possible."

"And she is out of danger?"

"She was never in it."

"Never in danger?" cried I, almost disappointed.

"She has nothing the matter with her," he replied, "but a slight feverish cold. I have seldom seen a finer or more healthy child. Good-morning."

I never was more annoyed. Here was I stirred to the depths by a baby's feverish cold. Of course I was glad it was no worse, but my friend was too absurd, and I did not spare him.

"Won't you resume your studies?" I asked, sarcastically, pointing to the disturbed book, which was lying at our feet.

His humility might have disarmed me. "I am afraid I have been a fool," he said; "but if you had seen her all flushed and breathing hard! and then she is so small and fragile!"

"Yes, for a noble woman," I remarked. He received the dart meekly.

"Philosopher," said I, suddenly, determined to rouse him at any cost, "when I entered this room you were engaged in prayer." His color certainly deepened.

"May I ask," I inquired, with an appearance of deference, "whether you were addressing yourself to the Personal First Cause, or to the Unknowable—but perhaps you were merely bowing to the Rational Order of the Universe?"

He made a gesture of impatience, but answered, still with studied moderation: "I was alone and in trouble."

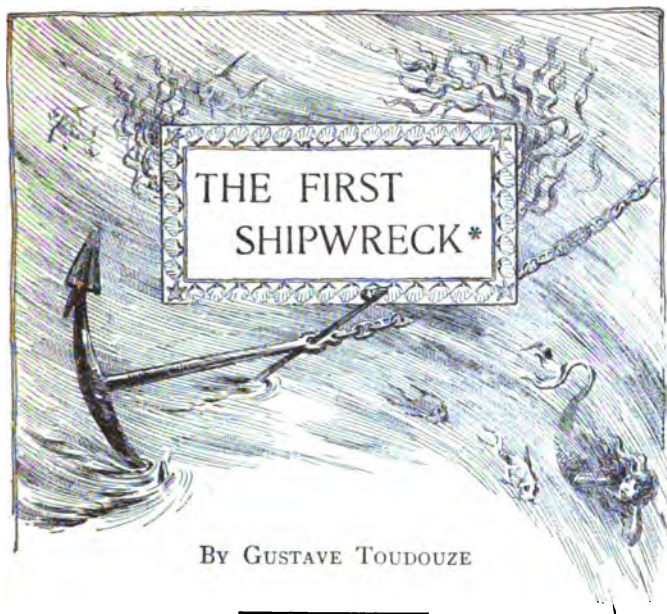
"And the efficacy of prayer?" I asked.

"For Heaven's sake," cried he, bursting into excitement, "stop your jargon! Nothing shows such ignorance of a subject as having all its cant phrases on the tip of your tongue. Can't I speak to God without expecting to be paid for it?"

This was turning the tables. If he was going to take to questions I knew I should end by admitting myself a fool. So to avoid a Socratic dialogue I put my hand on my friend's shoulder and said: "You are a good man, Philosopher; may you and the 'noble woman' live a thousand years."

"Thank you," he said, simply; "and now you must let me go and sing a paean with the nobler woman, my patient Penelope, my sweet wife."

So he went with long strides over the asphodel meadow, and I betook myself to my tent, full of pleasant thoughts.



IT was high-tide on Sunday evening, near the base of the lighthouse which stood at the extremity of the long pier, protecting the little port of Portrieux, in Brittany, on the west of the immense bay of Saint-Brieuc. Moored by a chain, a boat, which had been freshly painted, danced upon the water. On its stern shone out these words:

PAIMPOL—LA BELLE-YVONNE—502.

The sun had long since sunk out of sight, and night fell, drowning all this corner of France in transparent shadows. In the deep chasms of the rocks the waves were beating fiercely—almost growling, but upon the sandy beach they rolled, murmuring softly.

“Hark! do you hear it? It is calling us! It is time to quit our moorings if we wish to go as far as the Isle of Brehat,” said a fisherman, who descended the iron ladder of the pier, after having thrown his basket and oars into the bottom of his craft.

Yvonne Rouzic clutched her son, who was following, by the arm; her ear strained to catch the menace of the breakers upon the rocks, and a supplicating murmur rose to her lips:

\* Translated from the French, by Pauline Shackleford Colyar, for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

“Alain! Alain! My poor boy!”

The robust boy, proud of his fourteen years, listened only to the tender call of the sea upon the sands. He disengaged himself, saying:

“We must not miss the tide—quick!”

“My son!”

All her heart was in the words; uneasy for the first time, she held out her hands. Already Jean-Marie Rouzic had called out his farewell, triumphantly:

“À Dieu va!”

The sail went up slowly, with a noise like the prolonged cry of a bird, dragging a little, the length of the mast, and the boat moved obediently. It sank, little by little, into the night which took it, absorbing it gently, until it vanished in the dusk.

Yvonne came back with stumbling feet, overcome by a sense of abandonment, and the feeling that she had bid her loved ones an eternal farewell. Never before had her heart ached as it was doing now; it seemed to her that the night had darkened her joy and shadowed her life—that it was drinking the blood from her veins. She raised her head, looked at the sky, the coasts, the waves,—which were so strong, and yet so supple, as they rocked like a cradle—at the starry, moonless night, with clouds scudding here and there. She tried to smile, but in her mind rose up the thought: “It is the first time that he has ever left at night. My poor boy. If——”

She did not dare finish, and with superstitious haste began praying to all the saints, both male and female, who are said to protect mariners.

For several years they had been in the habit of quitting Paimpol to pass the summer season at Portrieux, leaving for the time the house and nest of little ones in care of an old grandmother. Jean-Marie went out with his boat, and Yvonne sold the fish on shore. Thanks to the wealth of the strangers who came there for the baths, their affairs prospered more than they had done in the country. But never before had their joy been so complete as it was this year. The oldest child, the boy Alain, now accompanied his father when he went fishing at night, and with the aid of former gains they had been able to refit the Belle-Yvonne. It seemed to Jean-Marie Rouzic that, on so famous a craft, he might go straight to Newfoundland if he wished; and he looked almost defiantly at the first boat of the season from those shores, with her paint-defaced hull incrustated

with shells and green with marine moss, the deck covered with salt and the air impregnated with the strong odor of the salted cod in her hold.

Until the hour of departure Yvonne had felt confident and joyous, but suddenly, at the moment of parting, a sob from the sea, alongside the pier, more violent than before, had awakened in her something hitherto unknown—the sense of fear. Memories of catastrophies besieged her; phantoms seemed whirling about her; lugubrious shadows of shipwrecks swept past her in mad dance. She rubbed her eyes, stammering: “I am a fool. *Ma Doue!* What is the matter with me this evening?”

Her brow was again smooth, her eyes shining with reawakened energy beneath the fluttering frill of her head-dress, as she exclaimed: “The daughter of a sailor, the wife and mother of sailors, ought I to begin to tremble at this late day?”

But her voice died within her, and once more she was seized with fright.

“Oh, God, protect them!” she cried.

As she lay on her bed she at first tried in vain to sleep, but found herself listening to the noises of the night, believing that she heard plaintive calls for help; but she was so exhausted from fatigue that at last she slept heavily, dreaming the while that she was falling into some great, fathomless abyss, where she heard the savage noises of the angry ocean, the formidable roaring of the water—the tempest itself. At dawn of day she was tortured by such anxiety that she thought herself dying, and awoke with a start. The empty room suddenly recalled the parting. In a moment she stood in the door. The sea was rolling as after a furious storm; the heavy sky was dark and lowering, but the boats were coming in together, with furled sails—they were all there. She laughed and showed her teeth, trembling, while her eyes flamed with joy.

A passing fisherman called out brusquely to the women assembled upon the pier-head:

“That was an awful squall at three o'clock. I wouldn't have cared to be near the rocky coast of Brieuç.”

Had she misunderstood him! With a hurried glance she searched among the boats; the Belle-Yvonne alone was missing. It was like a stab in her heart. She leaned forward and asked:

“Jean-Marie is not with you?”

A mist obscured their honest eyes; they tried to avoid looking at her. One of them said:

"I saw him at two o'clock going towards the open sea. He will return later on, no doubt. The catch will be great, it is said, so he is doubtless satisfied."

Turning towards a comrade, he said in a low voice: "God knows where Jean-Marie is sailing at this hour—the course that he will take. It was hardly prudent to face that big sea."

A little bewildered, and with the blood all gone from her brain, Yvonne murmured: "Ah, yes, he will surely return, and my boy with him."

With her elbows on the hard stone of the parapet, and her eyes fixed upon the horizon, she sat there without again speaking. In the evening she was still there. Night came on, and the lighthouse threw its red light over the waves; she had not moved, and sat there as though fascinated, her eyes on the distance and muttering to herself. All night she watched, her tearless eyes burning from the salt of the sea. When morning came she had fainted, and they carried her away.

Days and nights went by; at every return of the tide she came back and took her former position. All thought of her husband seemed dulled, almost extinguished in her; but above the roar of the breakers she cried out at intervals: "My poor boy! my poor boy! I should not have done it! The first time! It is not possible! The first time!"

Then from the depths of her bleeding heart she hurled cries, curses, reproaches, shrieks, at the relentless sea. No one could persuade her to return to Paimpol to her other children—to the nest of little orphans, in the midst of whom she might find consolation. She wanted to stay at Portrieux, to go morning and evening to the pier where they had left her, where she had seen them for the last time, to wait there still, wait always.

The fishermen, out of pity, had not told her all, in order to leave her that supreme refuge of the widows and mothers of sailors—hope; but, as to themselves, they hoped no longer. When they had returned, fleeing before the fury of the north-west wind, they had, in fact, met Jean-Marie Rouzic, and they advised him to go back with them. Consumed with pride of his new boat, he had refused, assuring them that he would go to the Island if need be, in place of accompanying them. Behind them the tempest broke in all its fury, and in the midst of this night as black as pitch, those who were last had heard two loud cries for help, the one more feeble than the other; but to go to their aid, to succour this boat in distress, was impossible. Thus



left to their fate, did the father, who was an excellent swimmer, struggle bravely? Did he bear up the son who did not know how to swim, until the fatal moment when a great wave engulfed the two, drowning in their throats the last cry, the cherished name of her who would wait for them always?

Weeks glided by, one after another, carrying with them the last days of summer, and extinguishing slowly in the hearts of those who had, perhaps, still dared to take courage, the last flickering flame of hope. August had gone, September in turn was passing, and the days went by one by one, falling off mournfully, like the dead leaves of a tree. The unhappy woman was always there—in the same place, at the end of the pier—passing like a pale statue of Despair among the groups of joyous women that came to welcome their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons, returning from Newfoundland. Each time it tore her heart afresh—these cries, these kisses, this boisterous joy, fluttering about her, touching her even, for none of it was for her.

Towards the end of the month the Newfoundlanders filled almost the entire harbor of Portrieux with their big, heavy vessels. Even the tardiest of them had come back; one only was missing, the *Désirée*, and nothing had been heard from her.

The relatives on shore were consumed with a fever of anxiety, waiting for those who did not come. Had there been a disaster? None of the fishermen who had returned could give them any information. Sobs, prayers, lamentations, now mingled with the wails of the lonely Yvonne Rouzic, as a flock of sea-birds hover around a mortally wounded comrade, while dreading a similar fate for themselves. She felt a sense of inward satisfaction, almost a selfish relief, to find that others were suffering as well as herself—that she was not alone in her sorrow.

Suddenly, one evening, just at the close of day, the *Désirée* was signaled. There was a delirium throughout the land, a murmured joy that floated the length of the pier—but Yvonne had never before wept so much as now. As the big vessel approached, all along the bulwarks and in the shrouds could be seen the silhouettes of men, who gesticulated and waved their hats and caps; and the wind, which was blowing from the ocean, brought with it snatches of joyous song repeated in chorus by all the crew.

With breaking heart, Yvonne Rouzic steadied herself against the parapet, while tears fell in great drops from the poor eyes already so tired, so red, and her lips trembled with convulsive

sobs. She seemed to realize that all was over with her forever, that she alone was unhappy, that no one understood or shared in her grief any longer.

The *Désirée* is in port, and as the tide is high she ties up alongside the pier. The cries, the calls increase, names are shouted from the boat to the pier, from the pier to the boat; the little port is intoxicated with joy. Yvonne tries not to hear. Yvonne puts her trembling fingers to her ears, struggling to shut out this noise of merrymaking that is maddening to her. Yvonne is weak and fainting, and wishes to die.

Two arms seize her from behind, two voices are sounding in her ears. They are doubtless those of the compassionate women who live near her, and who, wishing to console her, are willing to carry her, if necessary, to see this spectacle that is like a knife-thrust in her breast. No, no, she does not wish it, she resists, she will stay where she is, there always, there she will die. Those sorrowful yet cherished memories keep her there, hold her fast to the spot. By force they have turned her around. They are calling her name with a tenderness that is irresistible:

“Yvonne! Yvonne! Mother!”

“Alain! Jean-Marie! Living!”

Oh! that cry, that suffocation! It seems to her now that her poor heart must break, that it cannot contain all this happiness, filling it so suddenly. She weeps. She is powerless to check the tears that fall so fast from her smiling eyes, which are shining with a new and triumphant light.

Saved! Yes, they are there! Amid kisses and caresses they relate the incredible tale of their wreck; how they clung for hours to the oars, in the black night; how they were driven farther and farther out to sea, and how they were rescued at last by a ship bound for America. And how after the gratitude for their escape came the grief at being unable to make known their safety to the mother at home. So the weeks went by, until at last the *Désirée* was met and the captain gladly agreed to bring them home again.

Guided by the instinct of a wife and mother, Yvonne had been right in not despairing, in hoping in spite of everything.

She has gone back to her nest in Paimpol, together with the father and son whom all believed lost.

This first shipwreck has made a man of Alain Rouzic, and he will be one of those courageous and devoted Breton mariners—the pride, and the hope of France.

# A

## FREETHINKER OF CASTEL GONDOLFO\*

BY GEORGE FLEMING



MICHELINA, the little model from Castel Gondolfo, told me this. It was one afternoon, when she had been sitting for M'Carthy's Academy "nude"—the big Venus, we always told him, looked so exactly like his washerwoman when her clothes were in the tub; but that was not the fault of Michelina, who was a very good little girl, and very pretty, and who told me this story before going away, while she warmed her feet at the fire.

"It was my own father," she said; "but you must understand it was years before he was my father—years before he took the wine-shop or married mamma, and years and years before any of us were born or thought of. Afterwards he was my father—*capisce?*—but then he was young, just like anybody else, and he worked in the Nonno's fields at home, and when there was wine or oil to sell he put it all on a big ox-cart, and covered it over with fresh green leaves in the proper fashion, and drove it all the way along the side of the hills, under the trees, to the market-place at Albano.

"You, gentlemen, *non son mica Cristiani*—you are not Christians at all," says little Michelina, shaking her long earrings and looking straight over at Dysart, who had just left Oxford and had feelings—assorted feelings—about Ritualism; "but you come over here in crowds from outside, and you make statues, and you make pictures, and that is work for us. And the Madonna is very kind. I don't think myself you will be damned—not all of you," she added, with an infinite urbanity. "Still, certainly, it would not have done to talk of that to Father Gabriele. Father Francesco was parish priest at Genzano, and Father Teobaldo was parish priest at Arriccia, and at Castel Gondolfo we had our own Father Gabriele. And when the oil was not want-

\* A selection from "The Sketch."

ing for one altar, or the corn and the chestnuts had all been blessed, and a little portion carried home for each good Father to taste—as was only just and fitting—there were always all the brethren in the big convent on the other side of the lake, who never touched aught but clear water at their meals—holy men!—except by dispensation or in case of urgent sickness. That was why my own father and other young men of his age and his way of thinking would speak of the time of the new wine-making as ‘the sickly season.’ And ill words have a hundred legs. So that these things, and others, came to the ears of Father Gabriele, who thereupon took his stick in his hand, clapped his hat on his head, and climbed up the hillside to call upon the Nonno.

“I have heard my father and my grandfather tell the story of it a hundred times—how, when all the proper courtesies had passed, and his reverence had tucked up his skirts and was seated under the arbor, with a glass of last year’s best before him and this year’s green grapes hanging down over the top of his tonsured head—‘A fine house, a rich house, Sor Michele,’ he begins, looking up and down the fields, and taking no manner of notice that my father was busy cutting the young vine-shoots not ten yards away. ‘A rich house—the richest in my parish,’ he says, and crosses his legs one over the other, with the flat steel buckles twinkling in the sun.

“‘Ee—eh,’ says my grandfather, ‘his reverence will have his little joke with us.’ Then he picks up a clod of earth and crumbles it up between his fingers and looks at it, and turns it over, and smells it, and then throws it away from him, as if it were too poor stuff even to mention in such company. ‘Lacking horses, a man drives donkeys, your reverence. And the thirsty ass will drink dirty water—as his reverence knows better than I,’ says my grandfather, very innocently, and goes to fill up Don Gabriele’s glass. And my father snickered, bending his head down over his vines.

“‘Sor Michele, Sor Michele,’tis an expensive donkey that kicks its own master,’ says his reverence, looking very dark. ‘And ’tis I who hope you may not find it out for yourself—when it is too late, Sor Michele,’ he says, picking with his hand at his black soutane.

“Then my grandfather, who was an old white wolf for cleverness—the saints have his soul!—saw he had gone too near the fire. ‘*Con rispetto*, what is that?’ he asks, as if he had not heard or understood. ‘Was your reverence meaning my little

old she-ass who carries down the baskets to Albano of a morning? *Affedio!* I was just thinking in my mind it would be easy for her to stop at the *canonica* door on her way down. It would be an honor to us all, and she would feel it, poor beast, if his reverence's cook would just look over the baskets. She knows when her load is lightened; she understands like any Christian,' says my grandfather, feeling uneasy.

" 'Sor Michele, Sor Michele, be careful that there are not better Christians in your cow-stable than about your hearthstone,' says Don Gabriele, very solemnly; and at that my own father drops his big vine-cutter and steps up nearer, dragging his old hat off his curly head with both hands. 'Perhaps, if your reverence is kindly speaking of me,' he begins, half-laughing, for he was a lion of courage, was my father; but he never got a chance to finish what he meant to say.

" For his reverence jumped up, leaving his full glass untouched before him, and for those who knew him that was enough to turn one's flesh and blood into plaster. 'Sor Michele, and thou, Michele's son, I say it to both of you alike; this is but the beginning of the working week, but before the end, before Sunday at early Mass, I shall have seen you down on your four knees in the dust. In the dust of the common highway you shall kneel, before the weight of your sins of pride and stiff-neckedness and evil speaking of dignities be lifted from off your miserable souls. You shall kneel there, and it is I, your parish priest, with authority to loose and to bind, who tells you so. *In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti,*' says Father Gabriele, making a great sign of the cross.

" And it is a fact, for I have heard my father tell it a thousand times, that his skirts got longer and longer, and his cassock was blacker and blacker, and his three-cornered hat overhung his brows like a thunder-cloud, and his voice was like the thunder, terrible to hear—it came from under the ground. Only the flat, priestly shoe-buckles never altered; they twinkled and shone like the eyes of serpents in the poor, innocent grass.

" When he was safely away down the hill, 'By Diana and Diogenes!' says my father; 'where the fox has been, there you can smell his skin,' says my father, scratching his head.

" But the Nonno, he was a true wolf for wisdom. 'Silence, thou disgrace of my ruined home! O thou misbegotten! thou law-breaker! Truly, truly it is said, "Sons to bring up, iron to chew." Come, come thou hither to me, that I may break every

bone in thy body, ungrateful one! O youth without an education! "In the dust," says the priest. I, Michele di San Orso, with my old knees in his dust! Now, St. Michael and all good angels be between us and evil! Amen. On my knees in the highway dust! God keep us all from the rage of the wind, from women who talk Latin, and from a priest outside of his own churchyard,' says my grandfather. And all that evening he sat before the door of the house, thinking and thinking, and his thoughts—for he was a prudent man—lay heavy, like lead, upon his stomach.

"And now, gentlemen, listen to what happened, for this was on a Monday that his reverence visited the house. And the working week passed, and every night 'Tis one more gone,' says my father, and his heart rose lighter and lighter inside him, like the wings of a little bird. But the Nonno, he said nothing. And on Saturday it was market-day at Albano, and what with this and with that, and a fright that one of the new oxen had gone lame, and the tasting a glass every time a bargain was finished, and another glass, or it might be two, while he told the story of Father Gabriele's prophecy to a friend—it was nearly ten o'clock, and every light was out in the village before my father turned his cart out of Albano gate. 'Tis one more day gone, and, by Diana! 'tis the last,' he says to himself, as the empty cart creaked, and the two brave beasts stepped out side by side, all white, under the trees, in the faint moonlight. For I must tell you there was a little, small, old moon that night, a witches' moon—when the horns point upward. 'Now, the Holy Virgin stand between all good Christians and harm,' says my father, when he notices that, and crosses himself two or three times over. For it is one thing to talk in *piazza*, and another to be out, all alone, in the black hollow of the night. And, for all his boasting, he was his own father's son, and knew better than to go on bleating in hearing of the wolf.

"Well, he drove on. The cart creaked peacefully; the oxen chewed their cud, and under the thick trees their breath was like the breath of fresh-cut hay and flowers in a room. 'Mother of Mercy! what is that?' yells my father, starting up to his feet in the ox-cart, and the skin crawled and shivered all over his bones.

"Far on in front, under the Gallery, as we call it, where the road was darkest even by day, he was aware of a little, faint sound of a calling. It might have been a strayed lamb or a kid; it might have been a little, small, lost child in pain. It called and

called, and all the night was very still. 'Illusions,' says my father. 'Old women's tales,' says my father. 'It was that last glass of red. I must tell Toni, and how we will laugh!' says my father. Then the thing called again, and a cold wind played about the roots of his hair.

"But he was a lion, gentlemen, was my father, and a roaring Roman lion he showed himself that night. 'Courage,' he says to himself. 'Courage, Cæsar, my son. The Devil is dead,' says my father; 'or, if not, he is very old. I must ask his reverence,' he says to himself, and laughs out loud.

"His laughing made a strange, empty sort of noise, and the near ox lifted his heavy head and looked at him in the face, and blew out a great breath from his nostrils. 'Mé—mé—mé—éh,' says the sad little voice, coming out of the dark shadows. Then my father clapped his hat on his head, and swore a great oath that sure it was the child of some neighbor, wandered out there by itself and lost and left to perish in the black night. And at that the blood seemed to flow back in his veins, and his heart got light with a bound. 'Wait, little one! Wait, thou smallest, I am coming!' he kept calling out, and he just steadied himself for a moment with his hand on the tail of the cart, for, because of what he had drunk that night, it seemed that the high road was grown unsteady. 'Have patience; I come, thou small one, thou littlest!' And all that time the thing kept on crying and calling, so that it was pity to hear. Under the bushes he found it. He found it, groping about with his hands in the dark—something warm and soft, and living—and after he touched it it became quite still. A little, small thing it was, not more than two years old by the size of it, and dressed in a little goat-skin coat. But, for all that, it shook and trembled like a leaf when my father held it in his arms.

"'In the dust—I, Cæsar, son of Michael—I was to have knelt in the dust before a fat, dusty priest, and behold! I return like Cæsar of Rome, like our ancients—*i nostri antichi*—and white oxen draw my chariot,' says my father, climbing back to his old place upon the cart. 'Go on, my beauties, go on,' he says, still out loud, for the road just there, under the ilex-trees, is a very dark road at night. 'Mé—mé,' says the thing in his arms.

"'Is it crying for its mammy, eh? Now, the Holy Virgin, our Blessed Mother, keep thee until I can find and restore thee to thy own mother's breast, thou most unhappy,' says my father, very tenderly.

“‘Mé-éh-éh,’ says the thing, and at the name of the Most Holy Mother it began to struggle and kick like one possessed. And this shows how true it is that the Devil always leaves one door open to the saints, for, when the thing began its antics, ‘Sleep,’ says my father, very gently, to the creature in his arms; ‘sleep. Thou wast lost—lost like a little strayed lamb; yet I found thee; therefore sleep. The good God,’ says my father, ‘is very good. He sends the little tender new grass and the tender little new lambs together; and—— Holy Saints! blessed St. Michael and all angels be with us!’ says my father; and the blood stood frozen at his heart.

“For you must understand, gentlemen, that as he was coaxing and comforting that evil thing in the pitch darkness, behold! his hand passed over its head, and there, through the soft, silky baby curls that covered it, he felt two little, sharp, budding horns.

“Then he knew it for what it was, and how, by his own wanton speaking of holy men, he had fallen into the very clutch of the Evil One, and he all alone in an ox-cart, and coming to the bad turn of the road where, on one hand there is the hillside and on the other there is the Bottomless Lake.

“‘Mé—mé—mé-éh!’ says the thing once more, and louder, for the Power was waxing stronger in it; and it struggled again.

“Then, all at once, the mists of the wine had left my father; the knowledge of things came back to him, and behold! once more he became as a lion—a Roman lion. He shut his eyes tight. ‘In the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost!’ he said, and he flung the accursed thing far, far out into the moonlight. ‘Mé—mé—mé,’ it called thrice over as it sped through the air, and by that time its voice had grown to be the voice of a woman. Then it fell into the lake, and either the water rose to meet it or it fell in and the waves closed over its horned head.

“My father never waited to see which it was. He leapt out of the cart on the other side, and it was not ten minutes—no, nor five, before he was knocking at the door of the priest’s house and calling upon his reverence to help him. ‘In the dust, in the dust, in the dust,’ he said, and he knelt there all the time good Don Gabriele was waking from his first sleep and getting into his buckled shoes and his cassock.

“And that was how my own father conquered the Devil; but he was a good Christian, you see, *signori miei*—not like you others from outside,” said Michelina, warming her little feet before the studio fire.



## THE KAISER'S TREE \*

BY WILHELMINE VON HILLERN



IT was in the year of grace, 1511. Two men were crossing the turf of the quiet Minster Square in Breisach; one was somewhat advanced in years, with fine, aquiline nose, full blond beard verging on gray, and long hair that escaped in heavy locks from under a red velvet *berretta*. He walked with so majestic a tread that it was very evident he was no common man, but one on whose broad shoulders rested an invisible world. Handsome, tall and noble, he was indeed a King among men—a Kaiser—a German Kaiser from crown to toe; a poet, too, he was, and a hero in the true sense of the word—Anastasius Grün's "Last Knight," Maximilian I.

Here in Breisach—*his* city as he called it—the Kaiser escaped from all affairs of State, and here he wrote those tender letters to his daughter, Margaret, in the Netherlands. But in 1511 threatening clouds hung low and shadowed the Kaiser's brow, for they presaged a storm that was to carry him away forever from the quiet spot of earth he loved so well. His eyes swept sadly over the bright landscape that lay at his feet; and suddenly turning to his companion he asked:

"Whose children are those?" pointing, as he spoke, to a niche in the wall, where a boy and girl knelt and with great industry were planting a rose-bush. The girl was about eight years old, and the boy some four years her senior, and so absorbed were they in their work that they did not hear the Kaiser's approach. When he stood beside them the boy looked up and exclaimed:

"Why, it is the Kaiser!"

"What are you doing there?" asked Maximilian, his artist-eye feeding the while upon the charming little pair.

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"We are planting a rose-tree to the dear God," said the lad, fearlessly.

"And do you think the dear God will be much pleased?"

"It is the best we have," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

The Kaiser smiled, as he asked: "What is your name?"

"Hans Liefrink."

"And is the little girl your sister?"

"No, she is our little neighbor, Councilor Ruppacher's Maria."

"Ah, indeed! And you love each other very much?"

"Yes, when I grow up—and have a knife—I am going to marry her." The Kaiser looked astonished.

"Must you have a knife to get married?"

"Yes, certainly," answered the lad. "Without a knife I cannot cut, and if I cannot cut I cannot earn money, and I must have a great deal to marry Mailie, because she is a Councilor's daughter."

"But what will you cut?"

"I will cut wood."

"Ah, I understand now, you want to be a wood-carver. Was that your father's art?"

"Yes. When I was little I watched him carve, and now I want to learn myself; but father is dead and mother cannot buy me a knife."

"Will this do?" And the Kaiser drew a magnificent, many-bladed one from his pocket.

The hot color rushed into the boy's face and one could almost see his heart beat with joy through the little, coarse, torn shirt.

"Yes, yes," he stammered, "it is splendid!"

"It is yours; be diligent with it," said the Kaiser.

Hans took it timidly. "Thank you, very, very much," was all he could say, but a bright fire glowed in the dark eyes that showered sparks of love and gratitude upon the Kaiser.

"Now you can go to Nuremberg."

"I should love to go there to Dürer's, for I will never carve plates. I can't bear such flat work; I mean to carve figures that are natural and that one can take hold of."

"The genuine sculptor!" exclaimed the Kaiser. "You are right, Hans Liefrink; hold to what is natural and you will never fail." He drew a leathern purse from his doublet, and handing it to the lad, said: "Only have patience, Hans; keep these *gulden*s until you are old enough to travel, then go to Dürer and

tell him that as his Kaiser once held the ladder for him, so shall he hold it now for you, to mount as high as he. Will you promise me all this ? ”

“ Yes, dear Herr Kaiser,” cried Hans, enthusiastically, and he took the Kaiser’s hand and kissed it in his sudden joy. “ If I ever carve the dear God,” he exclaimed, “ I will make him look just like you.”

“ Farewell,” laughed the Kaiser, as he strode down the mountain with his companion.

The boy stood as in a dream, while Mailie chewed a hole in her apron. A maid came in search of her, and to her Mailie told the story of the Kaiser and the knife. It soon became the gossip of all Breisach. “ Hans Liefrink was such a bold fellow; it was no marvel that he should have been prattling to the Kaiser ”—and everyone wanted to see the wonderful knife and the contents of the leathern purse. But the latter Hans was prudent enough to show to no one.

Years passed. Hans Liefrink lost his mother—Mailie hers, and the orphaned children were drawn closer together. In the evening, after work, Hans would break through the hedge that separated the gardens, and would carve lovely figures for Mailie, such as no child in all Breisach possessed; and she listened in open-eyed wonder and admiration while he told her of the wonderful pictures and wood-carvings he had seen in the Freiburg Cathedral. Whenever they could, they ran up to the Minster and watered the rose-tree—the Kaiser’s tree, Hans had named it—and there they loved to linger, hoping always that their kind friend might come again. Often they called aloud: “ Herr Kaiser, dear Herr Kaiser, come again; ” but the childish voices echoed and re-echoed in vain under the blue sky—and the Kaiser came no more.

The little ones grew up, and the “ Kaiser’s tree ” grew with them, and they seemed more and more drawn to it and to each other, as though its tender roots had reached out silver threads of love into each heart, and bound them close with ties that held them fast. But, alas ! this one true friend was not strong enough to hold together what men would keep apart.

The lovely, stately *Ruppacherin*, the Councilor’s daughter, dared no longer be friendly with the poor wood-carver; her father strongly forbade it, and put a high wall between the two gardens, so that Hans and Mailie lost all chance of meeting, save

at the "Kaiser's tree," and here, but rarely, when the Minster was deserted.

But this only made the stream of love that coursed in their hearts overflow their lips, and one evening when Malie had long been absent from the "Kaiser's tree," Hans sang his first love song under her window, that overlooked the little garden :

"My heart is mine no longer,  
'Tis stolen quite away  
By a maiden, sweet and lovely,  
Who listens to my lay.

"There grows a slender rose-tree  
Within the Minster's shade,  
And underneath its branches,  
A sign of love is laid."

Early the next morning Mailie came to the rose-tree, and found a tiny golden heart hidden in the moist grass; she listened, with sparkling eyes and burning cheeks, to Hans's words of love, and laid the tiny golden heart on her own fast-beating one, and swore never to let it go, while Hans, half mad with joy, cried: "Ah, if only the Kaiser would come now"—but the Kaiser came no more.

The fall passed, winter came, and the young people saw each other more rarely than ever, but Hans often sang the Song of the Rose-tree, and many another, all telling of his love for Mailie, till at last her father noticed it and threatened her with his curse if she did not stop all intercourse with the "good-for-nothing artist."

So one day Hans and Mailie stood for the last time beside the rose-tree they had planted many years before. Mailie had told Hans of her father's threat, and now she stood silent, her hand resting in his, while tears coursed slowly down her cheeks.

"Mailie, tell me that *you* do not think me such a worthless fellow."

Her blue eyes looked full into his brown ones, and a smile of love and trust crept over her face.

"No, Hans, indeed I do not; no one shall ever make me think that. They do not know you as I do; you have taught me all that I know that is great and beautiful; you have moulded me and made me what I am, even as your artist-hand forms an image from a shapeless piece of wood," and she took his strong hand and pressed it to her soft, warm lips, then folded her white fingers over his brown ones and added: "I will believe in you

always, for you honor God with your art, and whoever does that cannot be evil."

"And will you be true to me, Mailie, till I have brought my art and myself to honor, and till I come back to claim you for my bride?"

"Yes, Hans, I will never leave my father's house but to go to you—or to the cloister. And if I should die before you come, I will ask them to bury me here, under the Kaiser's tree, where we have been so happy. Then, if you come back and lie here in the sunshine, to rest you from your toil and sorrow, every rose-leaf that falls on you shall be a kiss from me," and she wept on his breast, their tired hearts beating against each other in the pain of parting; while the promise of spring—of buds and roses—pulsed and throbbed in the rose-tree with the rising sap.

"Don't cry, Mailie," Hans said, trying to be strong. "I am going to Dürer's, and when I have learned to do something of worth, I will seek the Kaiser and ask him to use his influence with your father."

"Oh, yes, if the dear Kaiser would but come!"

"He will certainly come, my love," said Hans, "for we will pray the good God to bring him to us—or me to him." They knelt together in the cool, damp grass, and it seemed to their trusting hearts that God must work a miracle and change the Kaiser's tree into his own loved presence.

Suddenly the sound of the great Minster bell smote upon their ears—full of forebodings, mournfully, slowly it tolled. People began to climb the hill that led to the church, and Hans ran to them with eager inquiry.

"Where have you been? Have you not heard that our Kaiser is dead?"

The Kaiser dead! Poor Hans stood as if turned to stone. Where were all his hopes now? He rested his burning brow against the cool stem of the rose-tree and groaned aloud.

The knell had ceased and all of nature was so still and dead, it seemed as though spring and life could never come again. A light hand rested on his bowed head; Mailie had come to be his comforter.

"O Mailie, the Kaiser will never come again!"

"But God is with us," said Mailie, softly. As she stood before Hans in her maiden purity and beauty, the light of inspiration overspread his face and he whispered low:

"Mailie, God is truly with us. He shows me now—as in a

vision—the Queen of Heaven surrounded by holy angels, and if I can but carve all that He shows me, I shall be great myself and need a Kaiser's help no longer."

Next morning at daybreak Hans set out. As he passed Rupacher's house loud and clear his voice rang out :

" My heart is mine no longer,  
'Tis stolen quite away—"

Softly one of the lower windows was raised and a white handkerchief waved a last farewell through the dusky light, the song went on but the voice grew trembling and uncertain—full of unshed tears—then ceased, and all was still once more.

Years passed and nothing was heard of Hans Liefrink, and no one thought of him, save Mailie, in whose gentle, loving heart he was ever present and ever dear, and who watched for him till at last hope was almost dead, and the roses faded in her cheeks, and a dumb sorrow looked out of the sweet blue eyes. Her one pleasure was the care of the little rose-tree, and tenderly she watered it each day and saw with loving pride that it repaid her care, for it grew stronger and taller until it reached the very top of the niche where it was planted, then fain would go beyond, but she bent its budding top and bound it fast within the niche. She could do her work without hindrance from her father, for he was buried deep in political matters brought about by the Reformation, and paid but little heed to his daughter. Breisach was trembling for its old faith and Duke Ferdinand, Kaiser Maximilian's nephew and successor, counseled her children to do all they could to strengthen the Catholic faith, by means of votive offerings and ideal paintings and sculptures in their churches. The Minster had long lacked a high altar worthy of it; and notices were sent broadcast bidding all German artists to send in their plans that the best might be chosen and the work begun.

Mailie heard but little of all this, for she never went about among the people, and lived alone in her little bay-windowed room, waiting for Hans to come. But she was growing weak and weary with waiting, and the eyes she turned toward the Christ that Hans had carved for her were often full of tears. Five long years had passed since she had seen him, when one evening

" There grows a slender rose-tree  
Within the Minster's shade,"

echoed softly as a summer zephyr under her window. She sprang

to the casement and looked out, but could see no one in the darkness. Love lent wings to her feet, and like an escaped bird she flew up the mountain-side to the Kaiser's tree, where two strong arms clasped her and held her close, while her head swam and it seemed as if the waters of the Rhine were closing in about her. They held each other long in silent embrace, for true love needs no words to tell its depths. Hans was the first to speak.

"How pale you are, sweetheart; are you ill?"

She shook her head with a happy laugh. "Oh, no, not now. But you were gone so long. Why did you not come sooner?"

"I could not, little one. If I had come back a poor, unknown fellow, your father would have dismissed me again. So I stayed and feasted my eyes on all the art treasures of the great cities, and worked in Dürer's studio till my name was mentioned with honor among his pupils, and I said to myself, 'Now you may woo the lovely Mailie.' And when I heard there was to be a new altar put in our Minster, I hastened here to make application, and, if I am found worthy to do the work, what can your father have against me then?"

Mailie shook her head doubtfully, but Hans was full of joy.

"How the Kaiser's tree has grown!" he cried, in wonder. "It seems to have taken all the warm blood out of your cheeks, its roses are so red. Give my love's roses back to her," he said, playfully brushing her cheek with a flower, but they were pale and white. "That is not good paint; let us try this," and he pressed a kiss on her cheek. "Ay, that is better," he laughed, and laid her blushing face against his breast. "Bloom out, my little rose; the spring is almost here."

The next morning the usher of the high-gabled town hall came into the council chamber with hesitating steps.

"Your honorable body will be graciously pleased to pardon, but there is one without who insists upon coming into your presence."

"Who is it?" asked the Burgomaster.

"It is Hans Liefrink," said the usher, "but so much changed I hardly knew him. He wants to compete for the new altar and submit his plans."

"What should we have to do with such a scapegrace as he? Let him go back where he came from," was the decision. "We want no such bunglers as he."

The kindly old messenger left the room with a somewhat crest-fallen air, but returned almost immediately, bringing a paper

of draughtings with him, which he presented with many bows and apologies.

"Liefrink begs you will examine these, your worships, and you can inquire of Dürer, in Nuremberg, as to his ability."

"If the fellow don't take himself off we will have the jailer after him," cried Ruppacher, in a rage.

"Softly, softly, Master Ruppacher, the draught represents the coming of the Mother of God in Heaven, and is right fancifully thought out, it seems to me."

"But to imagine a thing is much easier than to do it. Liefrink never could do such a thing," said one of the Councilors. Besides, it was simply ridiculous to give such a work into the hands of a Breisacher child, whom some had even looked askance upon. So Hans was summarily dismissed.

The authorities finally decided to send their plans to Albrecht Dürer and to let him be their judge; and at the same time with the letter from the council went a letter from Hans to his great teacher and good friend.

Weeks slipped by in alternate anxiety and sweet stolen happiness for the lovers; they met as formerly at the Kaiser's tree, for the struggles of 1524 drew Ruppacher's attention from his daughter, and Mailie grew bright and rosy in this springtime of love. At last Dürer's answer came, but who can describe the amazement of the Council when it was found that the letter contained Hans Liefrink's despised plan and these words: "I can recommend nothing more beautiful than this plan of my friend and pupil, Hans Liefrink, whose ability to execute it I fully guarantee."

A half hour later a crowd of people pressed up the narrow street and stopped before Hans Liefrink's little house. He came to the door and, to his astonishment, saw a deputation from the Council, one of whom stepped up and told him with great pomp that his plan had been approved by Dürer, and he had been chosen by the Council to execute the high altar for the Minster.

Hans clapped his hands for joy. Was it really true, or only a beautiful dream? When the deputation had departed he hastened over to Ruppacher's, for this was his time to speak.

Mailie opened the door for him,—a low cry of happy fright, a quick kiss—and she disappeared into her own room, where, with beating heart, she sank before her crucifix and implored the



blessed Virgin's help. Hans stepped fearlessly into Ruppacher's presence, who cried with flaming eyes:

"What do you want?"

"Herr Ruppacher, I know an honest man who loves your daughter and who would marry her, and I want to bring him to you."

"So—and who may he be?"

"Myself, Herr Councilor."

"You! Did anyone ever hear such impudence; the beggar dares——"

"Herr Councilor," Hans cried out, "I never was a beggar. My father was poor, but he supported us with his wood-carving, and after his death my mother took care of herself and me by the honest labor of her hands. The only things I ever received in my life were the knife and the purse from Kaiser Max, and those I did not beg—he gave them to a poor boy in whom he recognized an aspiration for better things. I have worked hard with the knife and educated myself with the money, and both have yielded me good interest. I am no beggar, Herr Councilor, and for the next two years the commission I have just received will enable me to abundantly provide for a wife."

"Two years, and what then?" sneered Ruppacher.

"Then new commissions will come!"

"Oh, you think you are something fine, no doubt, but you belong to a race of star-gazers and loafers, who do nothing but spin dreams and are too lazy to work."

Hans was burning with indignation, but he controlled himself for Mailie's sake, and only said:

"A Kaiser held the ladder for Albrecht Dürer—the ladder on which he painted—and a town-councilor of Breisach, whose dust will soon be scattered to the winds insults his best-loved pupil. There, I tasted all the honor of my reputation; here, I must be insulted and trampled upon!"

"Then go back to your honor! Why did you come here with your silly art?"

"Because I love your daughter so truly that no sacrifice is too great to be made for her; and because I want her for my wife."

"Well, then I will tell you that you are as likely to marry a wife as far above you as my daughter is, as you are to build an altar in the Minster higher than the Minster itself."

"Is that all you have to say, Herr Councilor?"

He laughed contemptuously. "Carve an altar that is higher

than the church in which it stands, and you shall have my daughter—not before—so help me God!”

A piteous cry came from the next room. Ruppacher opened the door; Mailie lay unconscious before the crucifix. Hans hastened to her, but the angry man raised his hand against him. For a moment it seemed to him that the sacred knife must leap from his pocket; but he struggled with himself, and rushed out of the house, up the hill to the Minster, to his old friend, the “Kaiser's tree.”

It was a perfect noonday. A cloudless sky arched the shadowless earth; the castle of Sponeck was outlined against a background of gold, like some fairy-palace, and the Rhine broke in foaming surf on her steep rocks. But the beautiful picture before him wounded Hans, for it seemed to him that nature was unsympathetic with her child's grief, and he sat in the niche, under the rose-tree, for the first time failing to find happiness there. He could never win Mailie now, no one could help him, not even Kaiser Max, if he should come back from the grave, for had not Ruppacher sworn a terrible oath that he should never have her till he had made an altar higher than the church? And this was impossible, unless God should work a miracle for him; perhaps he might never see her again, and tears of longing and pain coursed down his cheeks, and he buried his face in his hands like a helpless child, and none came to comfort him; all was silent around him, save the chafers humming about the roses.

Suddenly something struck him sharply on the back; he started and turned quickly, but it was only the little rose-tree that had at last, by its own strength, broken forth from the niche where Mailie's hand had bound it, and in escaping, had struck him as if in greeting. There it stood, tall and straight, and he saw for the first time how much higher it was than the niche in which it grew. Quick as lightning, a thought shot through his tired brain. A moment of reflection—a cry of triumph—then he fell on his knees in joyful thanksgiving. “Lord God, Thou art great, even in Thy small things, and Thy wonders never cease!” What was it that the little tree had taught him? What was it that made him kiss its rough bark in a wild transport of joy?

Hans saw Mailie no more; her father had sent her to the convent at Marienau, yet her prison walls were not so strong but that a song, a greeting from Hans sometimes reached her. He, too, lived like a hermit in his cell, working from early dawn

till the last faint streaks of light tinged the western sky. Curiosity ran high, but every request to see his work received the same answer: "That was not included in the contract; they must wait." At last after two years of patient labor he declared the work done, and three days later, on the Feast of the Assumption, the new altar was to be dedicated. Great was the excitement, and that morning an unusual crowd of worshipers climbed the Minster hill. Joyfully the bell rang out across the Rhine, and Hans, who had been in the church since daybreak, gave one last glance of love at his work, and with bowed head and bent knee said: "God, bless thou the work of my hands," then disappeared behind the altar to watch the effect of his work upon the people. The doors were opened, the crowd streamed in, and a cry of surprise, wonder, and admiration echoed through the church. The altar lay in the full rays of the morning sun and the whole glorious vision stood out before their eyes in perfect rounded forms. In the centre was the blessed Mother with her arms crossed over her bosom, and head meekly bowed, to receive the crown that God the Father, and God the Son, held above her. A storm of joy seemed sweeping through Heaven that stirred the locks and garments of the celestial choir chanting "Alleluia." Was it possible that this could be hard, unyielding wood? And the simple country-folk who had never before seen anything so beautiful, stood in child-like awe and silent wonder. When the service was over all pressed forward to see the master of the great work. He came from behind the altar, modest and deeply moved, but so handsome and so full of unconscious pride that every eye hung on him in admiration. One by one the members of the Council shook him heartily by the hand, all but Ruppacher, who leaned glowering against a pillar. Mailie was with him; she had left the convent for this festival, and stood beside him, a holy light in her sweet, pale face.

"Is not the *Ruppacherin* like the Blessed Mother of God?" whispered one in the crowd.

"And God, the Father, is like Kaiser Max," said an old man, "'tis his face exactly."

Like a train of fire it ran through the crowd that Liefrink had put Mailie Ruppacher and Kaiser Max in his work.

"Yes, dear friends," said Hans, quietly, "you are right, and I have done it because I know of nothing in the world more beautiful and good than the *Ruppachern* and our dear dead Kaiser."

"Well said! He is right," was heard on all sides. Now Hans went fearlessly to where Ruppacher stood.

"Herr Ruppacher," he said, "two years ago you promised me your daughter for my wife when I should have fulfilled a strange condition made by you. I was to build an altar higher than the church—an impossible thing you thought; but look up, Master Ruppacher, the altar is a foot higher than the place in which it stands. I have only bent the top."

The Councilor looked up and grew pale. He had not thought of that. A moment of applause ran through the crowd.

"I have done my part, Herr Councilor, now do yours and give me your daughter for my wife."

Ruppacher tottered as if struck by a heavy blow. Hans had taken him at his word and he was not the man to trifle with his oath. He took Mailie's hand and placed it in her lover's.

"A Ruppacher has never broken his oath. Take my child," he said dryly, "since I have sworn."

"Mailie, my wife!" cried Hans, with exulting joy. After seven long years of alternate hope and despair he had won her for his own. Words cannot describe Mailie's look of happiness as she was folded in his strong arms. Kaiser Max smiled down upon them in friendliness and love, and everyone rejoiced with them. Some of their old companions ran out and hastily wove two crowns from some twigs of the rose-tree, and amid loud applause they crowned the Master and his bride. But Hans laid his crown on the steps of the altar, and said:

"Let them be God's roses, for through them He saved me. Look, Mailie," he whispered, pointing to the bent summit of the altar, "it was the Kaiser's tree that taught me that."

Three weeks later Hans and Mailie were betrothed before the altar. Breisach had never seen so magnificent an affair, and Father Ruppacher was no longer so testy as one might think, for he had now more respect for the worthless art of his son-in-law.





## WHERE THE NAIL PIERCED \*

BY PEDRO ANTONIO DE ALARCÓN

*Famous Story Series*

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NUMBER ONE.



MY place in the diligence was booked from Granada to Malaga, and, as the smoke-wreaths from my cigar rose and spread themselves above me, I mused, in an idle fashion, upon my unknown companions for the journey. For it is a serious affair, this chance and intimate union of people thrown together by the caprice of fortune, who may never again meet, who may wish they never had met.

My ticket bore the number 2; the third place in my compartment I learned had not been taken; but as I set my foot upon the step of the diligence, just before eleven of a dark and stormy night, I could but vainly conjecture the sex, age and character of Number 1.

As I entered the inner darkness, I addressed an affable "Good-evening" to my presumed companion, hoping thus to begin our enforced acquaintance auspiciously. No answer came. "Diablo!" thought I; "am I deaf or is he?" Raising my voice I repeated,

\* Translated from the Spanish, by Virginia Sarah Benjamin, for Short Stories.—Copyrighted. Illustrated.

still courteously, the salutation. Silence again. "Can he be dumb?" I asked myself. I felt for a seat and took it, and then the diligence started briskly under the impulse of its ten spirited horses.

Curiosity about my unseen fellow-traveller gradually deepened into awe. Fancies, too wild for repetition, began to chase each other through my ruffled imagination, spurred and shaped by fragmentary memories of tragical legends of the road. I might have lit a cigar and so gained a momentary glimpse of the interior of my prison, but, on searching my pockets, I found that my match-box had been left behind. At length I determined to solve by the sense of touch what was already becoming a torturing mystery. Little by little, I extended my hands, encountering nothing but the fabric of the diligence. Not until my outstretched arms were recklessly beating the corners of the compartment and my nervous fingers searching beneath the seat and among the leathern straps overhead, did the first vivid lightning-flash of the



long-gathering storm reveal to me that I was alone. An hysterical laugh broke from me at the discovery, and my composure was restored. At the same moment the diligence stopped; we were at the first relief-station.

Before I could descend to make inquiry for my missing travelling companion, the door opened, and by the light of an uplifted lantern I saw a lady, young, beautiful, pale, dressed in mourning, and alone; a realization at last of many dreams indulged in these my youthful and wandering days. Her murmured "Thanks; good-evening to you, Señor," as I gave my hand to assist her entrance, went straight to my heart. Only to Malaga? Would that the diligence and we had been going to Kamchatka!

We began our acquaintance with the customary travellers' talk, and separated with a declaration of love on my part. The intermediate details I pass over, save to mention my distress and perplexity at a fixed sadness which she strove in vain to conceal,

and that my passionate confessions were rejected with gentleness and pity.

"That word, Love, terrifies me," she cried. "It is hard to inspire feelings that afflict us both. Ah! if I could cause those I meet to hate me!" Again: "It is not you I refuse, but love." Could I do aught than press my suit in presence of this confession of esteem? Hope and illusion fled, at last, when she said, with suppressed emotion: "Señor, urge me no more! I have loved, loved to delirium, and have been deceived! My heart is dead." Thus we arrived and parted at Malaga; a handsome carriage, with attendants in black liveries, awaiting her at the inn.

AN AUTUMN JOURNEY.

On All Souls' Day of the same year, I was journeying by a post-carriage to an important town, the seat of one of the civil divisions of Cordova, bent upon a matter of business and a month's visit to the judge of the district, a fellow-student at the university, whom I had not seen for seven years. Earth and sky were gloomy, the memories of the day were melancholy, and, as I drew nearer the town, there came to my ears the mournful clamor of bells, tolling the vespers of the dead. My old class-mate was awaiting me at the outskirts, and rallied me upon my dejected manner and appearance. I fell in with his humor by responding that while I had not expected festival arches and a gala procession, I should have been glad of a more lively welcome from the town bells.

"Ah! Felipe," said Joaquin (for such was my class-mate's baptismal name), "this passing melancholy of yours fits well my own lasting sadness. Your visit is well-timed."

"You sad?" I cried; "since when, friend of my heart?"

He strove to suppress a sigh, shrugged his shoulders, and turned the conversation to indifferent things as we walked, arm in arm, to his house.

"Diablo! my friend, you are well lodged," I involuntarily exclaimed, as I entered the handsome dwelling into which he ushered me. "What neatness! what taste!" I added, as my eyes gradually took in the vista of the immediate apartments. Then turning to him, I said, "Joaquin, I have tripped in my courtesy; you have a wife for whom my compliments have not been uttered; you are married, old friend, and have not told me."

"No, no," he replied, in a disturbed voice, "you do our

friendship an injustice; I am not married and shall never marry."

"Pardon me," I said, "that last declaration is rash and incredible, coming from one in every way qualified to command his fate in marriage. What! you, the old-time advocate of matrimony amid scoffing students, the friend that wrote but two years ago urging marriage upon myself, say this?"

"You shall have my oath, if necessary," the young magistrate answered, solemnly.

"Then something very painful has happened to you," I said, taking his hand, "and you are going to tell it to me, the friend that has broken in upon the solitude of your heart, and he will see if he cannot serve you as well as listen."

His hand closed upon mine as he replied, after a brief hesitation, "Yes, you shall know all, for in truth I am very wretched, Felipe, and your sympathy will be welcome." Then, more tranquilly, he added: "This afternoon the townspeople all go to the public cemetery, and I must not be absent. After your long drive, the walk there will be agreeable, and on the way I will tell you the circumstances of an event that has, I fear, blasted my life."

#### VACATION EXPERIENCES.

An hour later Joaquin and I journeyed afoot towards the cemetery, and on the way, with occasional interruptions caused by the greetings of his fellow-townsmen, he told me the story of his grief. While serving as a king's attorney, some two years before, he had gone to Seville, to spend there his vacation of a month. At the place where he lodged was a handsome, graceful and obviously rich young widow living alone; and though her conduct was exemplary, her origin and business in Seville were unknown. Joaquin was already deeply enamored of the lovely stranger when a chance encounter brought about a speaking acquaintance, after which their mutual liking grew rapidly. By persistently urging his superiors, he succeeded in having his leave of absence extended by two additional months, which he spent in ardent courtship. Then he arranged with his betrothed that he should return to his post, settle his office affairs, resign his appointment and rejoin her at Seville in a month. Their marriage was then to follow, and thereafter his future career would be such as the tastes they shared in common and her ample fortune would enable him to pursue. He closed his business with such diligence that he was back in Seville a fortnight earlier than the appointed



time, only to learn that his affianced had left the day after his own departure, without explanation of her going or information as to her return. His daily letters were there, unopened, awaiting her call for them. To his surprise and distress, no word had come to him since their parting. He spent four or five distracted days in vain inquiries, then, after some months of despair, believing himself to have been the victim of a heartless and accomplished coquette, sought new surroundings and employments in the judicial office he now held.

In broken and agitated phrases, Joaquin made plain to me how vehemently and utterly his life had been merged in that of the one who had first absorbed and then flung him away; and, whether I contemplated his own strong nature or listened to his instances of her masterful character, I perceived that here was an extraordinary woman, and a situation, alas! hopelessly past mending. Empty, indeed, were such words of comfort as I could offer as a balm to his outraged affections and wounded pride.

A MAN OF THE LAW.

We entered the cemetery, a small piece of communal land, sown with wooden crosses and inclosed by a low, earthen embankment—a type of many burying-places, wherein the rich and poor sleep, alike undistinguished, in that equality so dear to the feelings of the proud children of Spain. Nor do they sleep long undisturbed, for the tenancy of the graves is renewed throughout in about two years, the bones of the ejected going finally to the charnel-house, after lying strewn about the cemetery till it shall please the sexton to collect and remove them. Thus it happened, that, as we walked amid these scattered relics of the dead, the eyes of the judge became fixed on a skull that attracted his attention by having some thick, black locks of a man's hair still attached to it. Stooping to examine it more closely, Joaquin started back with a cry of alarm, which I found to be caused by the presence in the skull of a large, sharp, iron nail, that penetrated the crown and projected through what had been the roof of the mouth.

When we had somewhat regained our composure after making this startling discovery, my companion said in a low, firm voice: "This is a call to duty; it is God that has placed before my eyes this mute witness of a crime against Him and our land, and never will I rest until the author of this horrible deed makes atonement upon the scaffold."

Joaquin went amid the throng of people in search of a notary to take the necessary depositions. Then he summoned the sexton, and by dint of much questioning, obtained the information, reluctantly given, that the grave from which the skull was taken had been prematurely opened to make place for a body which it was desired should lie in that vicinity, and that the coffin had been carried home by the sexton for such profit as could be made from its materials. An examination of the lid revealed the initials of the late occupant, and a search of the registers of the parish churches identified the skull as that of a very rich, but ill-esteemed, proprietor who had died in the night of a stroke of apoplexy after reconciliation with his wife, who had returned to her home after living long apart from him. With extravagant demonstrations of grief over his sudden death, she had left the neighborhood, a few days after the funeral, to seek the consolations of friends in a distant and unknown part of the country. The depositions of neighbors and servants afforded all the attainable information respecting the family name of this woman, whom the murdered man had met and married in Madrid. The testimony of the unsuspecting servants made it apparent to the judge that the wife had sought and taken the opportunity to commit the crime.

After waiting the necessary time for her capture or her voluntary appearance, in pursuance of warnings and proclamations sent through the judicial department of the kingdom, Joaquin pronounced and recorded the sentence of the law upon her in her contumacious absence. Thenceforward, he devoted himself to the redemption of his vow to bring the criminal to justice. "Here is the nail," he said, pointing to the sealed and authenticated casket in which the skull of the victim had been deposited among the archives of justice. "Heaven has revealed to us the impious hand that wielded the hammer which drove it, and doubt not, my friend, that the same just Power, will, in its own time, crown with success our humble efforts to bring the owner of that guilty hand to expiate his crime."

This was Joaquin, himself, upright, tireless, methodical, devout; full of zeal, industry and faith.

#### THE MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS.

That winter I attended a great ball at the house of a rich Señora in Granada, and there I encountered my Number 1 of the diligence. She received me graciously, and under the forms

of polite conversation I sought to ascertain her present disposition towards me. She urged me to marriage and generously foretold the happiness that I and the lady of my choice would find in our union, but forbade me to think of herself in that relation.

"Who is that engaging woman?" I asked of a friend.

"The Señora Mercedes de Meridaneuva, a South American," he replied. More than that I could learn from no one.

The following day I called upon Mercedes at her hotel. She met me with the cordiality and freedom of intimate friendship, and invited me to be her escort in a tour of the Alhambra. In that garden of nature and temple of art we spent several delightful hours. There, as we walked, I told her the story of Joaquin, to which she listened with a quiet, intent interest and, after a brief silence as I finished, said: "Señor, take the lesson to yourself, and place not your heart in the keeping of a woman you do not know." I disclaimed the possibility of her being capable of such deceit as my class-mate had suffered, but she did not accept the compliment frankly. A little later, as the conversation continued in the same channel, she remarked: "For me, there is no danger of deceiving, as I never speak thrice with the same man."

"Señora!" I exclaimed, passionately, "this is to bid me never to return."

"Not so," she answered, calmly; "it is only to inform you that I leave Granada at daybreak to-morrow, without expectation of ever seeing you again."

"You said the same at Malaga," I replied with some spirit; "yet fate, you see, has brought us together."

"Then leave it to fate! if you will; but, on my part, the adieu I now speak is eternal."

So saying, she took my hand and bent low above it in a profound salute. Thus, for the second time, we parted.

#### THE LIFTING OF THE CLOUD.

A few days afterwards business again called me to Joaquin's neighborhood, and I made him a visit. No intelligence had been gained of the murderess, yet he expressed the utmost confidence in her capture. "For," said he, "there is a dramatic fatality in these judicial cases that rarely fails. When the bones of the slain come from the grave to bear witness and make accusation, there is little for the tribunals to do but to carry out the formalities of the law."

Ah! Joaquin, thou mirror for upright judges!

My class-mate had learned nothing, either, of the woman that had betrayed him, and I grieved to see that neither his love nor his sorrow was abated. She had told him, when he thought her heart was his, indeed, that love was the glory of a life or its hell. This conceit he repeated again and again as he confided to my sympathizing breast his ceaseless misery.

That night as we sat in his cabinet reading over his latest instructions for the pursuit of the maricide, he received a message that a lady at the Hotel de Leon earnestly solicited his immediate presence. This mysterious summons much disturbed him, but, ever responsive to the impulses of duty and kindness, he quickly decided to go, and, taking with him his pistols, departed. Two hours later he returned, pale, trembling and almost speechless, and not until, while convulsively embracing me, he cried, "Joy, joy, my friend!" did I realize that his agitation was caused by excess of happiness. I was scarcely more tranquil as he told me that the lady who had sent for him was his Blanca, true as ever; more faithful than himself; for, returning to Seville at the lapse of the appointed month and awaiting him there till hope of his constancy had turned to despair, she had spent the months and years of anguish since in seeking him out, to learn her destiny from his own lips.

I was not satisfied with the account given me, incoherently enough, by Joaquin, but it was too evident that the acute young judge was lost in the infatuated lover; and finding that my demands for details and explanations pained him, I accepted his fond assurance and assented to his desire that I should serve as groomsman at the approaching wedding. "The age of miracles truly has not passed from the earth," I said, incautiously, "and"—then noticing his look of distress—"Heaven has miraculously decreed that the most wretched of its children shall henceforth be happy."

#### A THREATENING SKY.

Joaquin and I were still up and discoursing when, at two in the morning, we were startled by loud knockings at the street-door. We went together to open it, when there entered, breathless from running, an officer of the district tribunal, who, as soon as he could speak, shouted, in his excitement, "Señor, Señor, the murderess, Señora Gabriela, is captured, and at this moment is safe in the prison of this illustrious town!" Instantly upon these words my friend was again the judicial functionary, calm,

emphatic and business-like. A few pointed inquiries revealed the fact that for quite a month the detective-officers of the civil guard had been warm upon the tracks of the fugitive, and had surprised and secured her on the very night of her arrival in this town.

"We will go at once to the prison," said the judge, "and the declarations shall be taken this night. Do you, Señor Procurator, bid the notary attend, and also send after the sexton, that he may himself present the supreme evidences to the criminal, who will, doubtless, not deny the testimony of the iron tongue supplied by herself to the victim. Then, meet us at the prison for the discharge of your own proper office. You, Felipe, I designate as amanuensis, that you may assist, without breach of the law, at this assize ordained by Providence."

"Tell me," I whispered to the departing procurator, "where was this wretched woman, Gabriela, when the guards arrested her?"

"At the Hotel de Leon, Señor," he replied, courteously, and passed out of the door.

I looked furtively at Joaquin, but no reflection of the horrible suspicion within my soul appeared in his serene face. I glanced about, instinctively, as the wish to escape from a terrible catastrophe took possession of me; but presently dismissed the thought as unworthy of our life-long friendship. I resolved, also, that I would leave it to fate alone to work out events to a conclusion, and without a suggestion to the judge of my fears that the impending process would reveal three victims instead of one. How fortunate, by comparison with his wretched entanglement, appeared my unhappy love for Mercedes, who, though not for me, was a pure and unstained woman.

#### THE STORM BURSTS.

It was nearly four o'clock in the morning when the inquisition opened in the reception-hall of the prison, profusely lighted for the occasion. All the functionaries of police and prison that could make excuse were there, and a throng of curious and favored citizens was massed about the wide-opened door. Upon a table, in front of the tribunal, was the sealed casket containing the dreadful evidence of the crime. The judge sat in the centre of the tribunal, with the procurator and the captain of the guard at his right, and the notary and myself upon his left.

When all was ready, the judge tapped the bell to command order, and directed the warden to bring in the prisoner. I fixed my eyes intently upon Joaquin and saw and heard nothing in front of me. Soon I observed him turn pale, grasp his throat with one hand, as if to suppress some sound, and then look appealingly towards me. I bowed and said, "Quite true," in an ordinary tone, as if responding to some passing remark, at the same time contriving to place my finger upon my lips for a moment as a warning. The next instant the unhappy man sought to rise, when, behind the notary's back, I uttered the words, "Señor, Judge," in a voice, low but so stern, as to recall him at once to his place and duty. I detected the rapid, convulsive movement by which he drew himself together, and then his face assumed the rigidity of marble. Only the burning of his eyes assured me that he lived. The man was indeed dead; what remained alive was the inflexible magistrate.

Assured as to Joaquin, I turned my gaze in the direction of the prisoner, and suddenly the room seemed to grow dark and spin around as I saw before me—Mercedes!

When the sense of light and stability returned, my heart throbbed wildly to the wish that this woman, accused, already condemned, hopelessly enmeshed in the coils of evidence, might show her innocence and go free. I turned imploringly towards Joaquin, but his face expressed nothing, and the lustre of his eyes alone told the intensity of his feelings.

Gabriela was very pale, but also very tranquil. That calmness I knew was not insensibility. Was it the self-control not unsuited to a great criminal, or could it be the serenity of a white soul? Was her trust in the strength of her cause, or the weakness of her judge? Her eyes were fastened for a time upon Joaquin. Did she seek to inspire him with courage, or to incite him to dissemble? Her look might be a silent assurance to him of her innocence, or a threat to drag him down in her fall. But the fixed impassibility of the judge moved her at length to search the faces of his companions either for sympathy or intelligence. In this way she saw me and, for a moment, her face became flushed and agitated, then, again, pale and tranquil as before.

Joaquin, coming out of his stupor, asked, in a hard, husky voice: "Prisoner, your name?"

"Gabriela Zabara de Gutierrez," answered, in a sweet, composed voice, this woman who, but a few hours before, had called herself his Blanca.

Fortunately, all were looking only at Gabriela, whose soft and winning voice combined with her simple black dress to enhance the singular beauty of her face and figure. Already she was making friends among the spectators by the charm of her aspect and bearing. I was glad that none but myself saw the countenance and gesture of Joaquin as the force of this reply, to his formal question, fell upon him. He quickly recovered himself, and then, in a determined tone, as though he were playing all his hopes upon a single cast, he said, pointing to the black casket: "Sexton, come forward and do your office; open us this casket."

There was profound silence as the sexton broke the seal and laid open the box.

"You, Señora," continued the judge, looking fixedly at the prisoner with blazing eyes, "approach and say if you recognize the contents of this casket."

She had taken a few steps forward, when, as the sexton presented the open box towards her, she saw the dark head of a nail projecting above the white crown of the skull. She uttered one sharp, rending cry, then retreated in terror, throwing her arms wildly about and muttering, once or twice, "Alfonso! Alfonso!" the name of her husband. After this, she became apparently stupefied.

"Then you recognize that nail, which caused the death of your husband?" inquired Joaquin, rising, as he spoke, as if he himself had come out of the tomb to make accusation.

"Yes, Señor," responded Gabriela, in a tone and with an expression befitting an automaton.

"Do you mean by that you acknowledge that you are the assassin?" asked the judge, in a voice of such anguish that the prisoner was startled and began to tremble violently.

"Señor," she cried, "I wish no longer to live, but only to speak before I die."



Joaquin fell back into his chair as one stricken, and I was terrified by the fear of what was to come. Gabriela sighed deeply, and began to speak, her voice, face and manner adding their impressiveness to her address as she proceeded.

"I am going to confess," she said, "and in that confession must consist my defense, availing nothing against the law, but sufficient, perhaps, to shield my memory." Here she paused to bring her feelings under control, then continued: "Why should I deny the crime whereof I am accused? The living witnesses have proved me alone with my husband when he so suddenly died, and the dead has come from the grave to confirm and complete the testimony. The crime was horrible; I, a woman, committed it, but it was a man that caused me to commit it!"

Amid the sensation this remark created, I looked at the judge and perceived that he shook with terror; yet he commanded his voice and courageously exclaimed: "His name, Señora; reveal instantly the name of this miserable accomplice."

The prisoner cast upon him a look of intense adoration and exclaimed, passionately: "Never! Shall I draw him by a word into the abyss wherein for him I fall? Shall I drag him with myself to the scaffold, in order that he may not marry another? I will not! His name remains here," clasping her hands to her bosom, "for he has loved me, and I love him; yes, though he could avert my shameful death and will not."

Joaquin extended his hand as though to interrupt her, and I thought he was about to publicly accuse himself. But, with a glance of tenderness, she raised her own in protest and continued: "Yet it is I that conquer; not he. Señor, the Nameless One," looking proudly, yet fondly, at the judge, "you have lost."

At these words, attesting her resolution to save him despite himself, Joaquin bowed his head. She went on: "Married forcibly to a man I detested, and who became more detestable by his corrupt heart and shameful life, I spent three years of martyrdom, unhappy but resigned, when I met a man worthy of me and of whom I was then worthy. We loved, we adored each other. He did not know I was bound to another, and, in the happiness of loving and being beloved, I permitted the time to pass in which I could have informed him without incurring his reproaches for my deceit. This I could not endure, and so, on account of my weakness, infatuation and sad situation, both of us were entangled, deeper and deeper, until at last this man, always noble and pure,



told me that we must marry or part. Alas! I could do neither. How I clung to him! How I entreated him to love me and permit me to love, without imposing a condition that I assured him must, for inexplicable reasons, await Heaven's pleasure and not my own! Had he then cast me off, I could have gone back to my hateful duty, consoled to the end of life by the memory of the love of that peerless man. But his tenderness increased the desperation of my position, while it took from me the only means of escape."

Tears and sobs were now accompanying this womanly recital of a woman's joys and griefs, and amid the general emotion Joaquin's, otherwise dangerous agitation, failed to excite attention. Composing herself for what I realized to be the climax of this touching narration, Gabriela proceeded:

"I said to this man: 'My heart is forever yours beyond recall. With it you demand my hand. I am powerless—you are my fate, my destiny—my hand, also, is yours. Give me a month for affairs so sacred that not a lover, not even a husband, may know them. Then we will wed, and I shall ask you to take me so far hence that no whisper of reproach can reach me for obligations sacrificed at the altar of love.' To all this he consented, with an affection and confidence newly illustrating the exaltation of his soul. What immediately followed you all know. I usurped the function of Heaven and became its self-appointed executioner of justice upon the unworthy. But how swift the retribution! A fatality separated me from my lover and kept us apart, while I spent months upon months of anguish, both for my crime and my misfortune, believing myself deserted. At last accident, which had parted, reunited us, and he had but left me, to make brief preparations for our nuptials, when the tireless feet of justice overtook me, and I am here. It is the will of God, in whose presence I shall soon be; and there I will lie for ages, weeping, till He consents to recognize me as his daughter and pardon my many sins."

The prisoner's eyes and clasped hands were raised as she pronounced these closing words, and she stood as one transfixed in contemplation of the dread meeting she had pre-figured, till the warden, at a sign from the judge, touched her on the shoulder and pointed to the open door. She exchanged a rapid look of tenderness with Joaquin, and directed toward me a glance that I could only interpret as one of pride. Then she walked with a firm step out of the room, and the court officer, with a haste

and bustle that betrayed his anxiety to conceal his overwrought feelings, declared the audience closed.

Several days were consumed in the formalities of drawing up the entire process for the inspection of the revising tribunal at Seville, and what Joaquin suffered during this interval, I shall not attempt to describe. But the magistrate triumphed over the man, and when all was complete but the record of condemnation, he presided at another audience, and the prisoner being brought before him, he pronounced anew, in the customary manner, the sentence of death upon her, without external manifestation of feeling by either of the unhappy pair. I carried the process to Seville, and, at his request, came back without delay to Joaquin.

"I am going away," he said. "Await my return here. Do not ask me where I am going, and do not look so at me, for I assure you I meditate nothing rash. Care for the unhappy one, but do not visit her; that would be humiliation. Good-by till I am here again to thank you for the friendship that would share my afflictions."

"Do not visit her;" "that would be humiliation;" "the friendship that would share my afflictions," I repeated after he had gone. True, I had indeed the burden of his afflictions, but who was there to do the like office for me? Thank Heaven! not Joaquin.

#### EXPIATION.

Within three weeks the confirmation of the sentence was certified from the higher court, and the condemned placed in preparation for death.

The day of execution arrived. Not a word had been heard from Joaquin. A great, but orderly, crowd was in attendance, massed closely about the detachment of civil guards formed in a square around the scaffold.

As the bell began to toll, the official procession came from the court of the prison. Could this white-faced, wasted figure, attenuated to a shadow within the folds of her black costume, tottering without the assistance she refused, and barely able to support the ivory crucifix she held to her lips, be Gabriela? "Why did you not tell me of her intensity of suffering?" I demanded of the warden.

"Ah, Señor! I thought to spare you," he replied, sorrowfully, "for neither I nor the surgeon expected her to see this day."

I moved to the side of the prisoner. "Señora," I said, "is

there any service that friendship can render to consecrate its recollections of happier days ? ”

“ Thank you,” she answered, “ this is indeed true kindness. Father,” addressing herself to the priest beside her, “ may I speak a moment with this gentleman ? ”

“ Yes, my child ; but cease not to think upon God.”

“ Tell him,” she said to me, “ my last thought was of him ; my last word, his name ; his image, my last earthly vision ; my last hope, that in eternity we should meet again. May he be happy ; so happy as to forget me. And you, Señor and generous friend, forsake not that noble man, nor ever prove unworthy of his affection. Farewell ! ”

I could not speak. I bent my head and raised her bound and transparent hands tenderly and reverently to my lips, and as I sought for some place of seclusion I was conscious of seeing her begin the ascent of the scaffold. Then, in how long a time I know not, I heard sounds of commotion, which formed themselves at length into shouts of “ Pardon ! Pardon ! ” I hastened back



to the scene, and there came Joaquin, on a furiously galloping horse, waving his handkerchief to those on the scaffold. The warden hastened down to meet him, and receiving from his hand a large packet, opened it, and after rapidly scanning its contents, handed it to the commandant of police, who made proclamation of the gracious clemency of the King upon the representation of the esteemed judge of the district. These formalities completed, Joaquin passed rapidly up the steps of the scaffold, that he might himself unbind the hands of the woman he had rescued. She lay, apparently in a swoon, her head supported by the confessor. There she died, as though Heaven had decreed that she should redress her crime before man, as

already she had in the sight of God. She revived sufficiently, as she passed away, to recognize her lover, to feebly press his hand, and to murmur some unintelligible words of which his heart needed no interpretation.

THE PEACE OF GOD.

Six months after the death of Gabriela, I stood on the deck of a vessel, at Cadiz, to bid adieu to Joaquin who was going, under a judicial appointment, to a distant colony, there to exemplify and exercise those virtues and talents which the motherland but reluctantly spared, and would have been glad to recognize by advancement to exalted station. Since then we have never met nor have we ever parted. Time and industry have brought him peace, and though his life has been diverted by the great tragedy that crossed its path, it has not been wasted. Only the weak or unfaithful pass their clouded days in unfruitful despair. Wifeless and childless, Joaquin has been the spouse of the virtuous, the father of the distressed.

See, in this velvet box I keep the nail that pierced the head of Don Alfonso, the soul of Gabriela and the heart of my friend.

I married? No. "Had not the nail a fourth victim?" you ask. Again I answer, No; for I cannot be untrue to Joaquin by imposing my griefs upon the resting-place of his own. Here is the box; fate has charged me with the custody of the relic within it, consecrated by suffering, and the woman has not appeared with whom I have been willing to divide the sacred charge. Therefore I have remained unwed.



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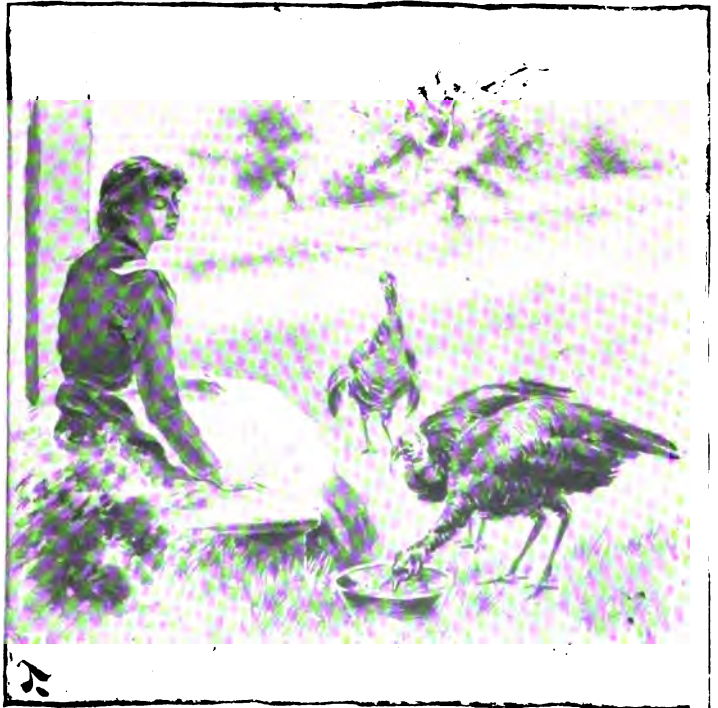
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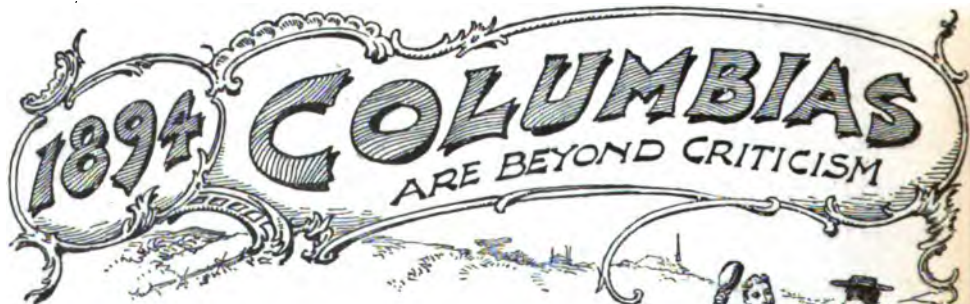
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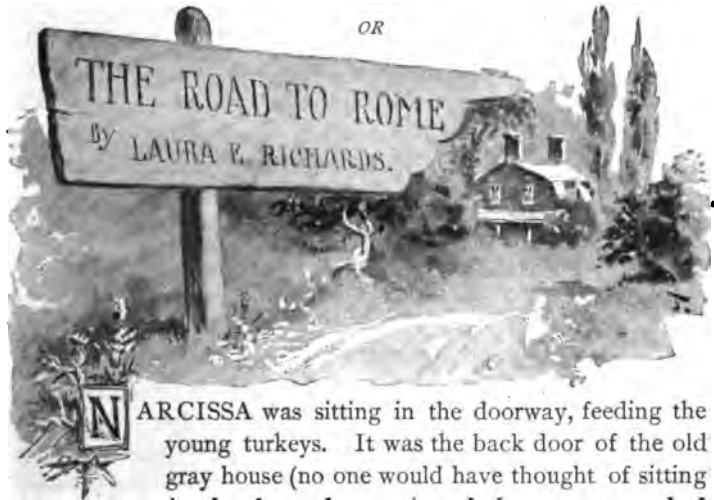
# SHORT STORIES

## A MAGAZINE OF FACT AND FICTION

Vol. XVI. No. 2. *This magazine is planned to cover the story-telling field of the world. Its selections will be of the best procurable in all the languages.* JUNE, 1894

### NARCISSA

OR



**N**ARCISSA was sitting in the doorway, feeding the young turkeys. It was the back door of the old gray house (no one would have thought of sitting in the front doorway), and there were crooked flagstones leading up to it, cracked and seamed, with grass growing in the cracks. Close by the doorpost against which the girl was leaning stood a great bush of tansy, with waving feathery leaves and yellow blossoms, like small gold buttons. Narcissa was very fond of this tansy bush, and liked to pluck a leaf and crush it in her hands to bring out the keen, wholesome smell. She had one in her hand now, and was wondering if ever anyone had a dress of green velvet, tansy-color, with gold buttons. The minister's wife once had a bow of green velvet on her black straw bonnet, and Narcissa had loved to look at it, and to wish it were somewhere else, with things that belonged to it. She often thought of splendid clothes, though she had never seen anything finer than the black silk of the minister's wife, and that always made her think of a newly-blackened stove. When she was younger she had made a romance about every scrap of silk or satin in the crazy-quilt that Aunt Pinker's daughter, the milliner, had sent her one Christmas. The gown she had had out of that yellow satin—it did her good to think about it even now! and there was a pale pink silk which

\* Written for Short Stories.—Copyright by Laura E. Richards, 1894.

came—was it really nothing but fancy?—from a long, trailing robe, trimmed with filmy lace (the lace in the story-papers was always filmy), in which she had passed many happy, dreamy hours.

It never occurred to Narcissa that she needed no fine clothes to set off her beauty; in truth, she never dreamed that she had any beauty. Color meant so much to her that she had always accepted the general verdict that she was “pindlin’-lookin’,” and joined sincerely in the chorus of praise which always greeted the rosy cheeks and solid-looking yellow hair of Delilah Parshley, who lived at the next house below the old gray one.

Yet it was true that Narcissa had no need of finery, and it was a pretty picture she made, sitting in the doorway, leaning against the old post. Her hair was nearly black, with no gloss or sparkle, only a soft, dusky cloudiness. It curled in little rings about her broad, low forehead, and round her soft, pale cheeks. Her eyes were dusky, too, but more violet than brown, and the only vivid color was in the scarlet line of her lips. There was nothing unhealthy in her clear pallor, no hint of sallowness, but a soft, white glow. The nostrils of her little straight nose were cut high, which gave them a look of being always slightly dilated; this caused the neighbors to say that Narcissa White was proud, though dear knew what she had to be proud of. As for her dress, it was of blue jean, a good deal faded, but all the better for that; and her white apron, though coarse, was spotless, and carefully starched.

The turkeys seemed to approve of her appearance, for they gathered eagerly round her, trying to get their beaks into the dish she held, gobbling, and fluttering, and making a great commotion. Narcissa was fond of the turkeys, and had names for all her favorites. The finest young gobbler was called Black Diamond, and he was apt to take unfair advantage of his mistress’ partiality, and to get more than his share. They all were so noisy that Narcissa did not hear the sound of approaching footsteps, nor know that some one had spoken to her twice in vain, and was now standing in silent amusement, watching the struggle for food.

It was a young man who had come so lightly up the steps of the old house that no sound had been heard. He had gone first to the front door, but his knock brought no answer, and, catching the flutter of Narcissa’s apron, he had come round to



the back porch, and was standing within three feet of the girl and her clamorous brood.

A very young man, hardly more than a boy, yet with a steady, manly look in his blue eyes, which contradicted the boyish



curves of cheek and chin. He was plainly but neatly dressed, and he carried in one hand a small satchel, such as travelling agents affect. His eyes were bright and quick, and glanced about with keen interest, taking in every outline of the house, but coming always back to the girl who sat in the doorway, and who was unlike any girl he had seen before. The house was dim and gaunt, with a look of great age. One did not often, in this part of the country, see such tall doors, such quaint chimneys, such irregular outlines of roof and gable. The green-painted front door, with its brass knocker, and its huge, old-world hinges, seemed to him a great curiosity; so did the high stone steps, whose forlorn dignity suffered perpetual insult from the malapert weeds and grasses that laughed and nodded through the cracks and seams.

And in the dim, sunken doorway sat this girl, herself all soft and shadowy, with a twilight look in her eyes and in her dusky hair. The turkeys were the only part of it all that seemed to

belong to the life about here, the hard, bustling life of New England farm people, such as he had seen at the other houses along the way. If it were not for the turkeys, he felt that he should hardly find courage to speak, for fear it might all melt away into the gathering twilight—house, maiden and all, and leave nothing but the tall elms that waved their spectral arms over the sunken roof.

As it was, however—as the turkeys were making such a racket



that the girl would never become aware of his presence unless he asserted himself in some way—he stepped boldly forward and lifted his hat, for he had been taught good manners, if he was a tree-agent.

“Excuse me, lady;” he said, “is this the road to Rome?”

Narcissa started violently, and came out of her dream. She had actually been dressed in the green velvet, and was fastening the last gold button, ready to step into the chariot that was waiting for her (she loved the word chariot, though the pictures in

the Bible made her feel uncertain about the manner of riding in one), and to drive along the road, the road to Rome. How strange that at this very moment, some one should ask about the road!

She raised her eyes, still shining with the dream-light, and looked attentively at the stranger.

"Yes, sir!" she answered. "This is the road—the road to Rome. But it's a long way from here!" she added, rousing herself and rising from her seat. "Shoo! go away, now!" and she waved a signal of dismissal with her apron, which the turkeys understood, and at sight of which they withdrew, not without angry cluckings and gobblings directed at the disturber of their evening meal.

"Won't you set down and rest a spell? It's ben real hot to-day, though it's some cooler now."

"It has so!" assented the young man, taking off his hat again to wipe his brow, and dropping his satchel on the doorstep.

"I should be pleased to set a few minutes, if I'm not intruding. And—do you suppose I could have a drink of water, if it wouldn't be too much trouble?"

Narcissa went away without a word and brought back the water, ice-cold and clear as crystal, in a queer brown mug, with a twisted handle and an inscription in white letters.

"I'm sorry I haven't got a glass!" she said. "But the water is good."

The young man drank deeply, and then looked curiously at the mug. "I'd rather have this than a glass!" he said. "It's quite a curiosity, ain't it? 'Be merry!' Well, that's a good sentiment, I'm sure. Thank you, lady! I'm ever so much obliged."

"You no need to!" responded Narcissa, civilly.

"I—I don't suppose you want any trees or plants to set out, do you?" said the stranger. "I am travelling for a house near Portland, and I've got some first-rate things; real chances, I call 'em."

"I—guess not!" said Narcissa, with an apprehensive glance over her shoulder. "I only keep house for the man here—he's my father's uncle—and he don't buy such things. I wish—" she sighed, and looked longingly at the black satchel. "I suppose you've got roses, have you? and all kinds of flowers?"

"I should think so!" replied the youth, proudly. "Our house is the greatest one in the State for roses. Let me show you some pictures!" He opened the satchel and took out a black order-book filled with brilliant pictures.

"Oh!" cried Narcissa. "I—I guess I'd better not look at em. I don't believe he'd like it. Not but what I'm just as much obliged to you," she added, hastily.

But the stranger had already opened the book.

"It won't do no manner of hurt for you to look at them. Just see here! here's the Jacqueminot rose, the finest in the world, some folks think. Why, we've got beds and beds of it. Splendid grower, and sweet—well! there! I can't give you any idea of it. Cornelia Cook! that is a great rose nowadays. And here's a white blush, that looks for all the world like——"

Here he stopped suddenly; for it was Narcissa's cheek that the rose was like, he thought, and it came to him suddenly that he did not want to say such things to this girl. The girl at the house below, when he had paid her compliments, had laughed in his face, well pleased, and seemed to ask for more; but she was an ordinary girl, like other folks; this soft, shadowy maiden might shrink away and vanish in the dark porch, if he should touch her rudely.

He need have had no fear, for Narcissa would hardly have heard or understood his compliment. She was gazing with hungry eyes at the bright pictures, drinking in every shade of crimson and scarlet and gold.

"Oh, stop!" she cried, eagerly. "Oh, may I read about that one? ain't it beautiful? may I?"

"Well, I should think you might!" replied the gallant agent, holding the book toward her. "Here, lean right over me; I'd like to read it, too."

"This grand rose," Narcissa read aloud, "has created an epoch in rose-growing. Of free habit and luxurious growth, the plants form the most splendid ornament of garden or hot-house. The beautiful, perfectly-shaped flowers show a marvellous blending of colors, in which a rich apricot predominates, shading into light pink, bright canary and pale yellow. The outer petals are grandly recurved, forming a fine contrast to the Camellia-like inner petals. With its rare and exquisite fragrance, its bold and beautiful foliage, and the unparalleled profusion with which its splendid blossoms are borne, we claim that this rose is absolutely *without a rival*."

Narcissa drew a long breath, and looked up, her eyes full of awe and admiration. "Ain't that elegant?" she said, simply. "They have great writers there, don't they?"

The youth smiled, as he thought of little Mr. Bimsey, who

"got up" the catalogues and kept the accounts; then, reminded by this and by the fading light that he had still a good way to go before nightfall, he added, rising reluctantly from his seat:

"I must be going, I guess. You haven't any notion how far it might be to Rome, have you, lady?" Narcissa shook her head.

"It's a long way," she said. "When Uncle Pinker goes there with the turkeys in the fall, it takes him the whole day to go and come."

"You haven't got a map of the county?" persisted the youth. "I'm a stranger in these parts."

Narcissa shook her head again. "We haven't got any kind of a map, as I know of," she said; but next moment her face brightened. "We've got a picture of Rome," she said brightly. "A real handsome picture. Would you like to see it?"

"Well, if it ain't too much trouble."

Narcissa led the way into the house, cautioning the stranger to tread softly. "Uncle Pinker is asleep," she said. "He's real old, and he sleeps in the afternoon, most times. He's so deaf he wouldn't hear you, most likely, but you never can count on deaf folks. Not but what he'd be pleased to see you," she added, after a doubtful look at a closed door as she passed it.

"I ought to make you acquainted with my name, seems though," said the agent, following her into a dim, dreary room. "My name's Patten—Romulus Patten." He paused and then went on: "Folks always ask how I got my name, so I get into the way of firing right ahead before they ask. My mother got it out of the history. She was a great hand for history, my mother was. It seems queer my going to Rome, don't it? They made considerable fun about it down to our place, but I'm used to that and don't mind it."

There was no answering gleam in Narcissa's lovely eyes. "Romulus? was he in the Revolution?" she asked. "I had to leave school before we got through history. I'd only got as far as the battle of Lexington when Aunt Pinker died, and I had to come and keep house for Uncle Pinker. It was real interestin'," she added, with a little sigh of regret. "I wish't I could have finished history."

Romulus Patten flushed with shame and anger; not at the girl, but at the sordid people who had kept her in ignorance. He had gone through general history himself, and, having a good memory, considered himself very well up in such matters. When

he came back, he thought, perhaps he might manage to stop a spell and tell her a little about things. Romulus in the Revolution! It was a scandalous shame, and she so sweet and pretty.

But here was the picture of Rome, and Narcissa turning with gentle pride to introduce him to it.

"Ain't it handsome?" she cried with enthusiasm. "I do like to look at it the most of anything, seems though. I think you're real fortunate to going there, Mr.—Mr. Patten."

She was silent, gazing with delight that was fresh every time her eyes rested on the beloved picture; and Romulus Patten was silent, too.

What was it he saw?

An old steel engraving, dim and faded, like the house, like the walls on which it hung, framed in dingy gold, spotted and streaked. Within, as in an old, dull mirror, appeared towers and temples, columned porticoes and triumphal arches; the whole appeared to be steeped in pale sunshine; in the background rose a monstrous shape, which Romulus' practiced eye, familiar with the illustrations in the "General History," recognized as the Coliseum. "That's Rome!" said Narcissa, softly. "Ain't it elegant?"

The young man glanced at her with a light of sympathetic amusement in his eyes. This was her little joke; he had hardly thought she would make jokes, she was so quiet. But the smile faded into a look of bewilderment, which quickly strove to efface itself; for Narcissa was not in joke. She was gazing at the picture with a rapt look, with almost passionate enjoyment. She had forgotten him for the moment, and had entered the city of her dreams, as she so often entered it, robed in velvet and satin (it was the tansy-colored velvet this time, and the buttons were very splendid indeed, and she had a bunch of roses in her hand), riding in a chariot. She was passing under those wonderful arches; that soft, mysterious sunshine wrapped her in a cloud of glory. Presently she would meet other beings, splendidly dressed like herself, who would greet her with smiles, and tell her of other strange and beautiful things that she was going to see. Ah! to be in Rome! to be really going there!

"Ain't it handsome?" she repeated, turning her soft eyes on her companion. "You're real fortunate to be going there."

Romulus Patten stammered. "You—you're sure that is Rome?" he said. "This same Rome, down east here? it don't hardly seem just like a down-east place, does it?"

The soft eyes grew wide, and the lips smiled a little. "Why, it says so!" said Narcissa. "See here, right under the picture, 'ROME.' So it couldn't be any place else, could it?"

"I—I suppose not!" murmured Romulus, hanging his head, like one found in an unpardonable ignorance.

"I hope to go there some day!" the girl went on. "It's never been so I could, yet; and folks don't go much from about here. Ain't it queer? they'll go the other way, to Tupham, and Cyrus, and other places that's just like—like to home here—" and she gave a little disparaging glance along the bleak road, with its straggling willows and birches, "and there's scarcely anybody goes to Rome. And it like that!" she added, with another look of loving reverence at the old picture.

"You said something about your uncle going," suggested Romulus. "Hasn't he ever told you about the place? whether it's—like the picture?"

Narcissa shook her head. "I asked him, last time he come back," she said. "I've asked him two or three times; but all he does is nod his head and laugh, the way he has. He ain't one to talk, Uncle Pinker ain't. He goes to Rome once every fall, when he kills the turkeys. The biggest part of 'em goes the other way, to Tupham and on beyond, but he allers takes some portion to Rome. He says they're great on turkeys there. I should think they would be, shouldn't you?"

This was a long speech for Narcissa, and she relapsed into silence and the picture.

"And you live all alone here with a deaf old man who don't talk?" said Romulus Patten. "Excuse me, Miss—well, you haven't told me your name, have you?" and he laughed a little.

"Narcissa," was the reply; "Narcissa White."

"Thank you," said the well-mannered Romulus. "You live all alone with him and don't see no company? It's lonesome for you, ain't it?"

"I—don't—know," Narcissa answered thoughtfully. "I never thought much about it's bein' lonesome. I have the turkeys, and they're a good deal of company; and I—I think about things." A faint color stole into her clear white cheeks, as she thought of the velvet gown. She supposed a man would consider such thoughts "triffin'."

"Don't you see anything of the neighbors?" the young man persisted. "There's a young lady down at the next house, half

a mile below here, wide-awake looking girl, with yeller hair and red cheeks; looks some like a geranium; don't you know her?"

"That's Delilah Parshley," said Narcissa. "She's real handsome, don't you think so? No, I don't see her, only to meetin' sometimes. I guess she don't care to go much with folks up this way. Her friends is mostly the other way, on the Tupham road. Their house sets on the corner, you know."

Narcissa did not know—how should she?—that Delilah Parshley and the other girls of her sort considered her "a little wanting," because she was silent, and never seemed interested in the doings of the neighbors, or of such stray travellers as came along the road to Rome. She felt kindly toward the Parshleys, as toward all the "meetin' folks," but she rarely held speech with them, and was "gettin' as dumb as the old man was deaf," the neighbors were beginning to say.

"But haven't you got any folks of your own?" this persistent young man went on. "I—I hope I'm not too forthputtin', Miss White, but I'd like to know."

"I'm sure you're real kind to ask," replied Narcissa, who was not used to having anyone care to ask her questions. "Yes, I've got *some* folks. Father's livin', but he's married again, and there's more children, and he was glad to have me find a chance; and it was so that I was glad, too," she added, with no resentment in her tone, but a touch of sadness, which made the ready color come into those tell-tale cheeks of Romulus Patten.

"It ain't right," he said, hotly. "I'll be switched if it's right.

Ain't there a better chance you could get, somewheres around here, if you don't feel to go fur away? If you did feel to make a change, there's lots of chances down our way. I'd be real pleased to be of assistance, if there was any way I could; I would, now, Miss White."

Narcissa looked a little alarmed.

"You're real good," she said, "but I ain't thinkin' of any change. Uncle Pinker means well by me, and the work ain't too hard, 'cept come

hayin' time, and along through the spring, sometimes, when I have to help in the garden. I'm sure I'm obliged to you!" she added, gratefully, with a shy, sweet look in her lovely eyes





that made Romulus feel as if the day had grown suddenly warm again.

"Well," he said, with an effort, "I really must be goin', I suppose. I've had a good rest, and I must be gettin' on."

But Narcissa was not ready to have him go now. Her heart was stirred by the unwonted kindness, the interest which this handsome stranger with the kind eyes had shown her, Narcissa White, who was of no account to anyone in the world. Her heart was stirred, and now she must show her gratitude in such simple wise as she could. She made him sit down at the table, and brought him doughnuts and milk and the prettiest apples she could find in the cellar. In fear and trembling she took from the cupboard a tumbler of apple jelly, wondering as she did so what Uncle Pinker would say, and whether he would call it stealing. She had made it herself, and had earned the money to buy half a dozen tumblers by braiding rugs for Mrs. Parshley. She had picked the apples, too; altogether she thought she had a right to offer it to the kind stranger.

He was delighted with his little feast, and pronounced the jelly the best he had ever tasted. She made it herself? he wanted to know; girls were smart, on the road to Rome, he guessed. He drank her health from the brown jug, and again she apologized for not having a glass to give him. "There is good glasses," she said with a blush, "but Uncle Pinker keeps 'em locked up. I broke one when I first come here, two years ago, and he's never let me touch one sence."

Romulus Patten muttered something in confidence to the brown mug, but Narcissa did not hear it. She was too happy to think that other people might consider Uncle Pinker a mean old curmudgeon. She felt a warmth about the heart, wholly strange to her starved and barren life. It had been dear and precious to dream, oh, yes! but here was reality. Here was some one like the people she dreamed about, only real flesh and blood, instead of shadows. He cared, this wonderful person, actually cared, to be kind to her, to say pleasant words, and smile and look at her with his bright, kind eyes. And he was going to Rome! That was almost the best part of all, for now she could fancy him there, and would have some one to speak to when she made her shadowy journeys to the Dream City.

She was hardly sorry when, the simple feast over, her new friend rose to go. It could not last forever, and Uncle Pinker would be waking up soon, and was apt to be a little set—as she

charitably expressed it—when he first woke. She made apologies for not having roused the old man, and was sure he would have been “real pleased” to see Mr. Patten, if it had been any other time of the day. She was a little startled when Romulus held out his hand at parting; she had an idea that people only shook hands at funerals; but she laid her little brown palm in the warm, strong one held out to her, and felt a cordial pressure that brought the tears to her eyes; the sweet, forlorn gray eyes, that never guessed at their own sweetness or sadness! Romulus Patten looked long into them before he let the little hand go.

“I sha’n’t forget you, Miss White!” he cried. “You may be sure of that; and I hope you won’t forget me, either, for a spell. I may stop on my way back, if I don’t have to go round another way when I leave Rome. I’ll try my best to fix it so as I can come back this way. And then—then, perhaps, you’ll let me call you Narcissa. Good-by, Narcissa!”

“Good-by!” echoed Narcissa; and then she stood on the doorstep and watched him, her new friend, the first friend she had ever had, as, looking back often, and waving his hand once and twice in sign of farewell, he passed along, down the road to Rome.

## PART II.

### WAKING.

“GOOD mornin,’ sir! can I sell you anything this mornin’?”

It was a strong, clear voice that broke rudely in upon Uncle Pinker’s morning meditations, as he sat in the doorway (the same setting that had framed Narcissa yesterday, but how different a picture!), smoking his short, black pipe.



“Can I sell you anything?” repeated the voice, with an imperious intonation. Uncle Pinker looked up; the sound was a mere murmur in his ears, but when he saw the figure before him, he recognized it for one he had some-

times seen on the road, and knew instinctively what was wanted. “Ga-a-ah!” said Uncle Pinker.

This remark was a favorite one of the old gentleman's, and, though no one knew its precise derivation, there was no doubt of its being the quintessence of scornful refusal. He used it constantly, but it never had such bitter force as when he was asked to spend money. "Ga-a-ah!" said Uncle Pinker again.

"What might you mean by that?" asked the new-comer, with some asperity. "That ain't no form of salutation ever I heard yet. Haven't you a civil tongue to use, old gentleman? You're old enough to have learned manners, if you'll excuse me sayin' so."

The old man snarled again. "I'm stone deaf!" he said. "I don't hear nothin' you say, nor yet I don't want to hear. You needn't waste no time, fur as I'm concerned."

"Stone deaf, be you?" returned the peddler. "Well, that has its compensations, too. You wouldn't buy anything, if you had the hearin' of ten, and now I can have the pleasure of tellin' you what I think of you. You skinny, starved old weasel, you're about the wickedest-lookin' old piece I ever set eyes on. Real-old screw, you are, if ever I saw one. Pity your folks, if you've got any; more likely you've starved 'em all off, though, and are skeered of dyin' yourself, fear of havin' another funeral to pay for. The Lord leaves folks like you for a warnin' to others, understand? set up, kind of, to show how ugly a critter can be when he tries. Oh, you needn't snarl at me. I'm enjoyin' myself real well, I tell you. There's other ways to have a good time besides sellin', if it is my trade. Guess I'll set down a spell, uncle, sence you are so pressin'."

Uncle Pinker was almost foaming with rage by this time; he could hear no distinct words, but the insulting nature of the stranger's speech was evident from look and gesture. He was just wondering whether his strength would suffice to throw himself on the intruder, when a new figure appeared on the scene; Narcissa, who had been busy in the back kitchen, and, catching some high note of the stranger's scornful speech, now came hurrying out to see what was the matter.

She found Uncle Pinker quivering in his chair, his lean, veined hands clutching the arms, his little red eyes starting from his head with impotent fury; and, sitting on the doorstep, looking up into his face with a smile of calm amusement, was—the strangest figure Narcissa had ever seen.

A person of middle age, with strongly marked features, and a countenance of keen intelligence, but dressed in a singular man-

ner. A suit of brown cloth, rather worn, but well brushed and neat; loose trousers, and a long-skirted coat, reaching to the knees; both coat and trousers trimmed with rows of narrow black velvet ribbon. The person's hair was cropped short, the



person's head was surmounted by a curious structure, half cap, half helmet, like that worn by Miss Deborah, in Cranford, only of far humbler materials. Beside the person, on the doorstep, lay a bag of the kind affected by peddlers, lank and shiny, and particularly unattractive in appearance.

Such was the individual at whom Narcissa White was now staring, with eyes very wide open; her look being returned by a keen, quizzical gaze, half smiling, and wholly shrewd and observant.

"Mornin', young lady!" said the strong, clear voice. "Wonderin' what I be, are ye? fish, or flesh, or red herrin', or what, hey? well, I'll put you out of your misery. I'm a woman, that's what I am; the folks calls me Bloomer Joe. Now, then, do you want to buy anything of me?"

Here her tone changed, and her voice rose in a singular chant, dwelling with dramatic emphasis on a telling phrase here and there.

"Buy any lace, threads or needles, pins—or—essences? Here's a looking-glass to see your pretty face in—prettiest face I've

seen along the road! (I tell that to every girl I see, and most of 'em believe it, but you ain't that kind, so you shall have the joke instead.) Real celluloid ivory combs, fit for the President's wife, sure enough. Gold beads, stocking-supporters, teeth-brushes—and—stickin'-plaster."

Here she dropped back into a conversational tone, opening her bag as she did so, and drawing forth some of its treasures.

"Just look at this lace, young lady! strong enough to hang yourself with, if you was feelin' that way, or to hang the old gentleman here, if you was feelin' another. I know which way I'd feel, quick enough. Not your father, is he?" she added, seeing a look of distress in Narcissa's eyes.

"Oh, no!" said Narcissa, speaking for the first time. "But—he's my uncle, at least, my father's uncle if he was alive, and I—guess you'd better not talk so, please."

"All right!" said the stranger. "I won't, not if it is any trouble to you. It would be meat and potatoes and apple-pie for me, if he was my uncle, to hear him get his rights for once in a way, but I see you're one of the soft-hearted ones. Want any salve? Here's a kind that will cure corns, bunions, rheumatism, croup, sore-throat, backache, horse-ail and colic; cure most anything except a broken heart, and won't do a mite of harm to that. But you don't need any salve, and the old gentleman he's past it. Well, then, here's ribbons, all colors of the rainbow. Red, yeller, blue, see? handsome, they are, and cheap as good counsel.\* Aha! you'd like to see them, hey?"

Narcissa had, indeed, changed color at sight of the bright ribbons, and she now gave an anxious glance at Uncle Pinker, who was still fuming and snorting in his chair.

"You, Narcissy White, send this critter away, can't ye?" he snarled. "Or else go into the house yourself, and go to work, not stand foolin' here, with the work all on the floor. Go 'long, d'ye hear? This woman, or feller, or whatever she calls herself, can talk till she's hoarse; she won't hurt me, nor she won't get nothin' out of me."

"Could I get a drink of water, do you s'pose?" the peddler asked quietly, paying no attention to the angry old man. "Needn't trouble to bring it out; I'll go right into the house with you if you've no objections."

She followed Narcissa into the house before the latter could make any remonstrance, and shut the door after her.

"He don't really disturb me," she said, "not a mite, but we can trade better in here. Let me try some of the ribbons on your hair. I don't often see such hair as this on my tramps, and that's no compliment, but the plain truth."

"Oh!" cried Narcissa in distress. "You're real kind, but please don't. I haven't got any money to buy things with, and I couldn't take your time for nothing. They are handsome, ain't they? Oh! that yellow is just elegant, isn't it? It's like the but—I mean like the tansy blossoms. I thank you for showin' them to me, I'm sure, but it ain't any use for you to."

"Don't he pay you for workin' here?" asked the peddler, with a sharp glance.

"Yes, he does pay me," Narcissa answered, "a dollar and a half a week. But—but I don't get it very reg'lar sometimes, and I'm savin' up to buy me a dress; I need one bad to wear to meetin'."

The peddler frowned. It was against her principles to leave any house where she knew there was money, without selling at least a box of salve; but this seemed a hard case.

"A dollar and a half a week!" she muttered, scornfully. "The old caraway-seed! he'd better go and live in Rome and be done with it. He'll find plenty of company there."

Narcissa looked up with wide eyes.

"Why do you say that?" she asked.

"Because Rome is the skinniest place on this round earth," was the reply, "and I think 'twould suit your uncle down to the ground."

Still the girl gazed. "I guess you're mistaken," she said quietly. "I guess you never was there, was you?"

"Never till yesterday," replied the woman, "and never want to be there again. You see, this isn't my own country at all, as you may say; I belong to another part of the State, and most generally keep to my own beat, havin' my regular customers, understand, and goin' round amongst 'em. But oncet in a while the fancy takes me to roam a little and see other parts, and so I come round through Damascus and Solon and passed through Rome yesterday."

"Oh!" cried Narcissa, breathlessly. "You did? Do tell me! And wasn't it elegant? I don't see how you could come away. Did you walk about and see all them handsome buildin's, and did you see the folks?"

The peddler gazed at her in wonder. The girl's eyes were like

stars, her whole face alight with enthusiasm and delight. What did it mean?

"Handsome buildin's?" she repeated. "In Rome? I'll tell you what I saw, child, and then you'll know. I saw the forlornest place on this earth, I don't care where the next may be. I saw rocks and turkeys, turkeys and rocks. The street (if you can call it a street—'twould be called a hog-wallow down where I come from) is solid rock where it ain't mud, and solid mud where it ain't rock. There's a house here and a house there, and they all look as if they was tryin' to get away from each other, but didn't darse to move for fear of fallin' down.

"The folks I saw were as lean as their own turkeys, and I can't say no further than that. I tried to sell 'em some of my salve; told 'em it would heal the skin where 'twas broke with the bones comin' through, but they was past jokin' with.

"I tell you, child, Rome is the—— Why, what's the matter?"

The good woman stopped suddenly, for Narcissa was trembling all over, and her face shone white in the dim, half-lighted room.

"I—I don't understand you!" she cried, wildly. "There's some mistake; you went to the wrong place, and never saw Rome at all. Look here!" and she led the way swiftly across the hall into the other room, the room into which she had taken Romulus Patten the day before. She almost ran up to the picture, and motioned the peddler with an imperious gesture, strange in so gentle a creature, to look at it. "That is Rome!" cried Narcissa. "You went to the wrong place, I tell you. This—this is Rome!"

The woman drew out a pair of spectacles and fitted them on her nose with exasperating deliberation. She took a long look at the old picture, and then turned to the trembling girl with a kind light of pity in her eyes, struggling with amusement.

"You—poor—deluded—child!" she said, at length. "Who ever told you that was Rome, I should like to know?"

"But it says so!" cried Narcissa. "Can't you read? 'ROME.' There it is, in plain letters; and I—don't—" she wanted to say, "I don't believe you!" but the bright blue eyes that met hers steadily, showed nothing but truth and kindness.

"So it is Rome, dear!" said the peddler, speaking now very gently. "But it's anncient Rome, over in Europe; Italy, they call the country. Where the anncient Romans lived, don't you know? Julius Cæsar, and all those fellers who cut up such didoes hun-

dreds of years ago? Don't tell me you never went to school, nor learned any history."

"I—I went for a spell!" Narcissa faltered. "I had to leave when I was fourteen, because I was wanted to home, and we hadn't only got to the Battle of Lexington in history. I did hope to learn about the Revolution to home, but father's wife didn't think much of readin', and she burned up the book."

There was a silence, and then the good-natured peddler began fumbling in her bag.

"It's a livin' shame!" she cried indignantly. "Here—no, it ain't neither. Well! I did think, much as could be, that I had two or three little books here, and I should have been pleased to give you one, dear, just for keeps, you know; but they don't seem to be here. Well, never mind. I was goin' to ask if you wouldn't like this piece of yeller ribbon you seemed to take to. It's a real good piece, and I should be pleased—I declare, child, I do feel bad, to have spoiled your pretty notion of Rome. I s'pose you thought likely you'd go there some day, hey? Well, well, sit down, and let me put this ribbon on your hair. You no need to be scairt of me. I act kind o' wild sometimes, like I did with your uncle, but it's four parts fun. I'm well known up our way, and anybody'll tell you I come of good stock, if I am crazy enough to wear sensible clothes, that don't hender me walkin' nor settin'. Mis' Transom, my name is. And he called you Narcissy, didn't he? Why, I had a cousin once, name of Narcissy; it's not a common name, either, and I allers thought it was real pretty. Set down here, dear, and let's talk a spell."

Thus the kind woman rattled on, watching the girl quietly the while. She was making time for her, giving her a chance to recover from what was evidently a heavy blow.

But Narcissa scarcely heard her. She was dazed; her dream was shattered; her glorious city laid in ruins, the beauty and romance of her whole life dashed away, as a rude touch dashes the dew from the morning grass.

As she sat, trying to realize it, trying to think that it really was not so much, that there would be other pleasant things, perhaps, to fill the barren working days, and gild the grayness of the long, lonely Sabbaths—as she sat thus, a new thought flashed into her mind, piercing like the thrust of a sword.

Her friend! Romulus Patten! She had sent him off on a false scent, had lied to him about the place—the city—she could hardly bear even to think of its dishonored name now. He had



gone there, thinking to find what she had told him about—the stately houses, the arches, the soft sunshine gilding all. What would he think of her, when he found it was all a cheat, a lie? He had been kind to her, had seemed to care about her, as nobody had ever done in her forlorn young life; and this was how she had repaid him.

She started up, shrinking as if from some cruel sting. “I must go and tell him!” she cried. “I lied to him, though I didn’t know it was a lie. I must go and find him, and tell him I didn’t mean to.”

“Tell who?” cried the peddler, catching her by the arm. “What is it troubles you so, Narcissy? who did you lie to, I should like to know?” “Don’t believe she could tell a decent lie if ’twas to save her own soul,” she added to herself.

But Narcissa did not heed her. She had taken down her sun-bonnet from a nail, and was tying it under her chin with trembling fingers, with a feverish haste that took no note of anything.

“Where are you goin’?” cried Mrs. Transom, now beginning to be frightened at the girl’s wild looks.

“You’re never goin’ out of the house, feelin’ like this? You’ll have a fit of sickness, sure as you’re alive, and then where’ll you be? and ’tis all foolishness, too, I’ll be bound. I can’t understand a word you say, Narcissy! And there’s a storm comin’ up, too. I see it as I was comin’ along, and was reckonin’ on findin’ shelter here, when I fust stopped to speak to the old gentleman. There! hear the thunder, this very minute! Narcissy! why, good land of deliverance! she’s gone!”

The storm came on very suddenly. First a low bank of cloud, heaving into sight on the western horizon, long and misshapen, like the back of a kraken. Then the whole monster revealed, rising across the sky, tossing monstrous arms abroad, showing ugly tints of yellow, ugly depths of purple and black. There was no lightning at first, only low mutterings of thunder, and every now and then a pale lifting of the darkness, as if the monster were opening his cavernous jaws, showing glimpses of dim horror within. Then, of a sudden, with no note of warning, the whole sky sprang into flame, the whole air was a roar and a bellow, deafening the ears, stunning the senses, and the storm broke over the road to Rome.

The rain struck aslant along the highway, driving a spray be-

fore it, as of a mountain stream. In five minutes no road was to be seen, only a long stretch of brown water, hissing and writhing under the scourge of the rain and wind. A horse came plodding carefully along, crouching as well as he could, picking his way through the water; the two men in the buggy behind him were crouching, too, and trying to hide behind the rubber boot. It was some comfort to think that they were making some attempt to keep dry, though both knew that they were already drenched to the skin.

"It's lucky for me that I met you!" said the younger of the two, shaking himself, and sending a shower of drops in all directions.

"P'raps 'tis just as well!" replied the other man, with a chuckle. "You'd hardly have known yourself from a muskrat by this time, if you'd had to foot it from Rome here. Been stoppin' there?"

"Stopping as long as I cared to!" said the youth, who was no other than our friend Romulus Patten.

"I got there last night, and was good and ready to come away this morning. I'm travelling for Brown's Nurseries, and there don't seem to be any call for any of our goods in Rome. Stonecrop's the only plant they raise much of, I guess."

"Well, that's so!" said the elder man. "That's so, every time. I never knew but one man that could make anything grow in Rome, and he carted all the dirt three miles, over from North Podley, before he could make a seed grow. Yes, sir, he did so. Mighty poor country up that way. Some say the Rome folks don't see any garden-truck from year's end to year's end, and that if you ask a Rome girl to cook you up a mess of string-beans, she takes the store-beans and runs 'em on a string, and boils 'em that way; but I dono. I'm from Vienny way, myself."

"My gracious! what's that?"

The whole world had turned to livid white for a moment, dazzling and blinding them; but still they had seen something on the road, something like a human form, torn and buffeted by the wind and the furious rain, but staggering on toward them with wild, uncertain steps.

"My God! it's a woman!" cried Romulus Patten. "Stop your horse and let me get out! A woman, alone in this storm!"

He sprang to the ground, and holding his arm before his face to keep off the blinding rain, made his way toward the forlorn

figure, splashing through the water, now ankle-deep in the road, stumbling, often on the point of falling.

"Hold up, lady!" he called out in his cheery voice. "There's friends here; hold up just a minute!"

At the sound of his voice the woman stopped and seemed to shudder and clasp her hands. "I never meant it!" she cried out wildly. "I can't see you; I'm most blind, but I know your voice. I never meant to lie to you about Rome. I—I thought 'twas all true, and when I found out I came to tell you. I never meant to send you there on a lie."

"Narcissa!" cried Romulus Patten. "Oh, Lord! Oh, you poor little thing! and you thought I didn't know? I'd ought to be shot, that's what I ought to be. Here, you poor little thing, let me take your hands; they're like wet ice, and you're shivering all over. Oh, dear me, come here and get right into this buggy."

"Easy there!" said the owner of the buggy. "Seems to me you're makin' yourself rather too free, young feller. Do you think I'm goin' to have that gal brought in here, runnin' all the rivers of Babylon? Who in Jerusalem is she, anyway? Some of your folks?"

Romulus Patten's face was streaming with cold rain, but he flushed as if a flame had swept over him.

"She's the young lady I'm going to marry!" he said. "Will you take her in, or shall I carry her home this way?"

"Now you're talkin'," the stranger said, removing his arm and making way. "Why didn't you speak up before, Sonny? Here, give me a holt of her." He lifted Narcissa gently into the buggy and drew her close to his side, laying her head well up on his shoulder so that she could breathe easily. "Family man!" he explained. "Gals of my own. Now, you reach under the seat there and bring out a shawl you'll find."

Romulus obeyed, and, half angry, half pleased, watched the



stranger as he deftly wrapped the shawl round the fainting girl and put her dripping hair tenderly off from her face.

"Allers take a shawl along," he explained further. "Wife enjoys poor health, and have to be ready for a change of wind. Comes in handy, don't it? Now, get in, young feller, and tell me where to drive to. You needn't look down in the mouth, either, 'cause you don't know everything in creation yet. Time enough to learn, and you're likely to learn good, I should say. And you rest easy, my dear," he added, speaking to Narcissa, as if she were a small child. "Here's your friend alongside of you, and you're just as safe as you would be in the best stuffed chair in the settin'-room at home. Fetch your breath, like a good girl, and try to look about you."

But Narcissa heard never a word, for she had fainted.

An hour later, Romulus Patten and Mrs. Transom were sitting by Narcissa's bedside, watching her. She had fallen into a deep, childlike sleep, and their low voices did not disturb her.

"The old gentleman was so mad, he was all cheesed up," the peddler was saying. "There! I was fairly sorry for him, old weasel as he is; so I let him go on for a spell, till he was clean tuckered out, and then I e'en took him up and put him to bed, same as if he was a child. Glad enough he was to get there, too, if he *was* mad. Then I took and made him some warm drink, and gave him to understand I'd stay by till Narcissy come back, and here I be.

"And now, young man," she added, fixing her keen, blue eyes on Romulus's face, "I've got a word to say to you. You let fall something when you was bringin' this child in—I won't say that I wasn't mighty glad to see her, and you, too—but you let on something about keepin' company with her. Now I want to know, right here, what you meant, and who you are, and all about it. Oh, you may look at my pants much as you're a mind to. I come of good folks, and I dress as seems fit to me, and I don't care in any way, shape or manner what folks say or think. I've been snoopin' round some, since I put the old man to bed, and I found the family Bible; and this child is the lawful daughter of my cousin, Narcissy Merrill, that I haven't heard of this twenty-five years. Bein' so, I'm goin' to stand by her, as is right and proper; so now I'll hear what you've got to say. I've as good a right to do for her as that old skimp-jack in there, if he is her father's uncle."

Romulus Patten spoke out frankly. He had "taken to" Narcissa from the first moment he saw her. When was that? well, it wasn't long ago, it was true. It was only yesterday, but he wasn't one to change, and he had never seen a girl yet that he would look twice at. And when she came, in all that awful storm, just to tell him—here the young man choked a little, and the woman liked him the better for it. He made up his mind then, he went on, all in a minute, that she should be his wife; and she should, if so be she was willing. He would go back to the place and see if he could get a job in the garden. He might have had one now, but he was some tired, and had thought it would rest him to travel a spell. He would quit travelling now, and had little doubt that he could have a good place. He knew of a pleasant rent (in our part of the country a hired tenement is known as a "rent,") with four rooms that belonged to a friend of his, and he could get that, he guessed. In short, the sooner Narcissa got away from Uncle Pinker, the better, in his opinion; and he was willing to take her, any minute she'd go. That was all he had to say for himself, but he presumed Mr. Brown would give him a character, if he was asked. He had worked for Brown's three years, and had no reason to think they weren't satisfied with him.

When Romulus had finished his little speech,—which left him flushed and tremulous, yet with a brave light in his eyes and a tender look as he glanced at the couch where his love lay sleeping quietly—Mrs. Transom gazed at him for a while in silence, then she held out her hand and grasped his heartily.

"I guess you'll do!" she said. "I guess you're the right sort. Now, I'll tell you what. You go along and get your place, and see about your rent; don't engage it, but get the refusal of it, if it belongs to a friend, as you say. Then you come back here, and find your girl all well and peart again, and you say your say, and let her say her's. P'raps there ain't much doubt of what it'll be, but all the same, you don't want to take any advantage of her being sick and weakly now—now, you no need to flare up! I say you don't want to, and I mean it. You'll need a box of my salve, if you're so thin-skinned as all that comes to. You go along, I say, and when you come back, come over to my place—Tupham Corner, third house from the cross-road, white house with a yeller door. Everybody knows Mis' Transom's house. You'll find your gal there, and you'll marry her there, with her mother's cousin to

stand up with her. There! don't be scairt! Pity some gals haven't got the trick of blushin' as you have, young man. I'll put on a long skirt, and nobody's goin' to say 'Bloomer Joe' round where my own folks live, you'd better believe. What say? like my idee, or have you got a better one yourself?"

"You're real good!" Romulus cried. "Poor little Narcissa! It does seem as if she had found all her friends at once, and she never having any in her life before, as you may say. I tell you, Mis' Transom, I'll treat her as well as I know how. If she was a queen, she shouldn't have any more care than what I'll give her. I—I think a sight of her!" he added, simply. "Seems as if she always belonged to me, somehow."

"That's right!" said Mrs. Transom, who was as romantic as any lady in silk and satin. "That's right, young man! We'll get her away from this old rat-hole, and then I guess it'll be a good while before either you or I travels this way again, hey?"

"I don't know as I have anything to say against the country," said Romulus Patten, with another loving look at the sleeper. "It isn't exactly the place to sell trees, but yet there's good things to be found on this road—the road to Rome."





## AFTER THE PLAY \*

BY MAY D. ENGLE

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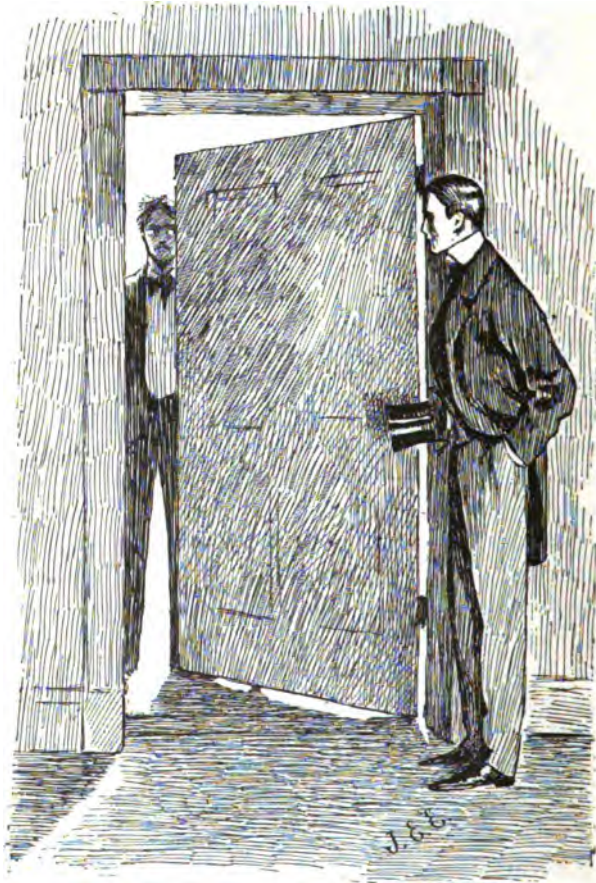
JOHN ARMSTRONG had come to Paris, with a heart aglow with pleasant anticipations, and a mind well stocked with sturdy resolutions; the anticipations had been more than realized in the "American's Heaven"; as for the resolutions, well, one always speaks reverently of the dead, and the resolutions had faded away to the shadowy realms of oblivion.

Foremost among said resolutions, had been the determination to look up his old-time friends, the Desmonds—only two of them left now, of all the merry crew that swarmed about the old place, just across the sleepy village street from Armstrong's own home; these two—Kenneth and Honor—had left the little Southern town, where they had lived all their careless, uneventful lives, some three years before Armstrong had followed them. They sold the old home, and with the proceeds determined to go to Paris, that Kenneth might pursue the art that he had decided was his vocation. At first they had written to Armstrong, but gradually the correspondence dropped, and with it the interest that one feels for what was once a part of one's life.

Armstrong, I grieve to say, never gave more than a passing thought to the people who had once been his closest friends, until an opportune legacy gave him a chance to rest from business cares, usually synonymous with a run across to the other side. So he came to Paris, and after several weeks, he realized, one morning, with a sort of shock, that his time was limited, and he had not yet found the Desmonds. Then he began a system-

\* Written for Short Stories, with illustrations by Jane Erin Emmet.—Copyrighted.

atic search—he hunted ateliers and galleries and other spots frequented by the artistic world, and all with no success, until one day, struck by a certain resemblance to Kenneth that he fancied he saw in a gaunt and hollow-eyed individual, he in-



stinctively followed him, and traced him to the top floor of a building, in a small street of the student's quarter.

Obeying an irresistible impulse, Armstrong knocked, and the door was at once opened by the Gaunt Individual, who glowered at him in anything but inviting fashion. "I was told that Mr. Desmond lived here," announced John, mendaciously, his eyes taking in, with a lawyer's practiced keenness, every detail of the bare little room before him.



The Individual hesitated a moment, and then replied, unpromisingly, "I am he. What can I do for you?"

John smiled serenely. "You don't seem very pleased to see me yourself," he remarked, "so you might just tell me where Honor is."

Hysterical fervor has gone out of fashion nowadays; old friends, when they meet, do not give vent to wild bursts of enthusiastic delight. They behave like other reasonable beings, who are not old friends, and considerately refrain from howling their surprise and rapture all over the universe; so Kenneth recognized his old friend quietly and decently, and allowed him to come in and occupy the one available chair his studio contained, while he balanced himself on the window-sill.

"Well, old fellow!" he remarked. "Behold before you the successful artist! Observe the elegance of his studio, his tasteful surroundings, the costly hangings on his walls, and the products of genius which strew the floor." He laughed somewhat bitterly. John looked grave.

"I do, indeed, see the evidences of genius," he began, as he glanced around at numerous canvases that lined the walls and were piled against each other on the floor.

Kenneth interrupted him gayly: "Everything I have done lately is here; I am not besieged with customers."

John went about the room as gravely as if he were on a hanging committee; the work seemed, to his unpracticed eye, very attractive, very fresh, and artistic in a manner, yet singularly lacking in something indefinable; the same want appeared in all the canvases. Then he came back to Kenneth. "Tell me about it," he said, gently.

"Well," said Kenneth, "there isn't much to tell; after spending two years at the atelier, I found the money was growing beautifully less—that it wouldn't keep us both—so I knew it would be better to give it all to Honor—she could live comfortably on it—while I hustled for myself. She doesn't know. She thinks I can work better if I'm entirely by myself. I told her so, and she has an idea that I'm a grand seigneur. I never allow her to come here, and when I go to her I array myself in purple and fine linen, and look most imposing, I do assure you. My cadaverous aspect she attributes to the merry life I lead. I have an idea that she thinks I waste my substance in riotous living;" and he laughed again, a little sadly this time.

John sat in a brown study; here was something for him to

do, and he hardly knew how to do it. He could not offer to buy his friend's work—the friend would not have sold it to him—his Southern pride would have blazed at once at the thought of taking alms, and he would so have regarded an offer to buy his pictures. But Armstrong was as determined as the other was proud, and he resolved to leave Kenneth's affairs in better shape before he left Paris. Another resolution!

Pulling himself together, he expressed his sympathy for Desmond's ill-success, and his pleasure at meeting him again, briefly, and wound up by asking for Honor's address. Kenneth gave it, adding, "I won't go with you; I'm too busy;" but finally consented to try to find time to see Armstrong at his apartments a few hours later.

All the way to Honor Desmond's little home, John revolved plans whereby he might assist his friend without offending him, but almost gave up in despair. If he could only ask Honor about it! She was always so quick to see; but, under the circumstances, she was the last person to know about it. He groaned inwardly, and brought up opposite Honor's domicile with a little start.

Yes, Mademoiselle Desmond was in, the old concierge told him. Should he have the pleasure of taking to her the name of M'sieur?

"No," said Armstrong, "Miss Desmond expects me," feeling that the Father of Lies must, by this time, be regarding him as one of his most accomplished sons.

"Ah! a compatriot of Ma'amselle's," murmured the old man, making no further effort to detain him, and doubtless concluding it was only another peculiarity of "those mad Americans."

Armstrong climbed the stairs, and was just in the act of climbing more stairs, when he met what he at once concluded was the object of his search—at any rate, it was an exceedingly pretty girl, and Armstrong felt that he wouldn't be going far wrong to accost her in any case.

He paused in front of her, but the girl, barely inclining her head, essayed to pass him. Armstrong laid his hand on her arm to detain her. Like a flash her brown head was thrown haughtily back, and she turned to annihilate the intrusive stranger, when he smiled at her cordially, and exclaimed, with calm certainty, "Honor!"

The expressive face lost its hauteur, looked puzzled for an instant, then changed again to delighted recognition. "Jack!" she

cried, "Is it really you? Oh, Jack, how glad I am to see you! When did you come? How did you know where to find me? Have you seen Ken? I certainly am mighty glad to see you! How are you all, anyhow?" the familiar old Southern phrases falling naturally enough from her lips, in the flood of old memories he had roused. We still allow women a little of the enthusiasm we deny to men nowadays; but we by no means approve of it.

Jack had both her hands by this time, and seemed quite content to stand there indefinitely, but Honor turned and fled precipitately, so evidently expecting Armstrong to follow her that he perforce did so, carried along by the impetus of her superior energy.

Honor stopped presently before the door of her little sitting-room and ushered her guest therein with an air of proprietorship.

"I live here," she announced, a little proudly. "Now, Jack, sit down and tell me all about home. Why didn't you write? Who's living on the old place? How's old Aunt Tamar and the rest of the folks? Oh, Jack! I'm mighty glad to see you!"

And, indeed, in her excitement the tears stood in her eyes, so that Armstrong thought she was altogether the prettiest thing he had seen in wicked Paris. Without giving him an instant in which to reply, she poured forth a flood of inquiries and exclamations, and then, with the sudden change that was always one of Honor's greatest charms, she said, solemnly:

"I want you to help me, Jack. We always came to you in the old days to get things straightened out, you know. You were always so much bigger and stronger, and—and wiser than we were." Artful flatterer! Armstrong weakened visibly, even though he detected an audacious lack of adjustment between her statement and the facts. "It is about Ken, you know."

Armstrong looked grave again.

"I've been so worried about him. You see, Jack, he's just infatuated with a little actress he met, somehow." John's face relaxed. How was it that *that* solution of Ken's misfortunes had never occurred to him? He was certainly old enough to ask the world-worn question, "Who is the woman?" anent any calamity that befalls the sons of Adam; but Honor went on, "He was quite successful with his work and sold it readily for a time, but since he met her he has dropped everything else, and only works when he is in absolute need of the wherewithal to buy her the gifts she demands. Even then he seems to have fallen off in his

skill, or so I have heard. His work is no comparison to his first pieces. Why, Jack, he even wants to marry her!" and Honor's face expressed such genuine horror that Armstrong laughed outright, but speedily assumed a sober aspect when she gazed at him with deep reproach in her brown eyes. "Now, Jack," she finished, imperiously, "do something."

"So Ken has fallen into the snare of a woman," mused Armstrong, tentatively. "Poor Ken! Didn't he know that naught but woe followeth the trail of the petticoat? So young, so fair! With gold—speaking of gold—" checking himself abruptly. "Does she want to marry him? If she does, I decline to take a hand in the game. I might outwit a man. I'd never try it with a woman."

"Men are but poor creatures"—quoth Honor, scornfully. "Of course she'll marry him, unless—unless"—with sudden inspiration—"she can marry somebody she thinks richer. Why shouldn't she marry you?" Brilliant suggestion, this—and Honor was evidently proud of it.

If Armstrong was confounded by her audacity, he never showed it—with a coolness equal to her own, he remarked with mournful calmness: "But I thought you were going to marry me. If the other woman does, what becomes of you? While the existing narrow laws obtain, I can't marry you both."

Honor declined to notice him, beyond a glance of some contempt: "Is this a time for airy persiflage?" she cried, tragically. "John Armstrong! will you help me to save my well-beloved brother from the clutches of this——this——"

"Demoniacal assassin?" finished Armstrong, seeing that she paused for words strong enough to express her conception of the situation.

The tears sprang to impetuous Honor's eyes, as she turned away with a little gesture of impatience. Armstrong's usual gravity returned as he caught sight of the tears;—man-like, the distress of a pretty woman, who doesn't belong to him, is as touching as the grief of one who does belong to him is annoying.

"Now, Honor," he said, judicially, "tell me just what you want me to do."

"Well," said Honor, her grief disappearing by magic. "This actress—Fanchette is her absurd name—is very pretty, I believe—she's a dancer, a person of no education or refinement, and Ken has just gone wild over her. How he met her, I don't know. He's as restless and unsatisfied as a caged beast when

he isn't with her, and when he is, he's quarrelling with all the other men that flock about her. He doesn't eat, so you see it's serious, and I'm afraid he drinks more than is good for him. Now, I'm sure, if he could only be gotten away from her influence, he'd be sane again."

"Exactly," said Armstrong; "but where do I come in?"

"I'm telling you," went on Honor. "She fancies Ken is rich, because he always makes her handsome presents. Now, Jack, you must get to know her; you must make her handsome presents, and, if necessary, you must marry her!"

"Oh, no!" said John, decidedly. "I cannot consent to sacrifice you, even to Ken. I really must decline, for your sake, to marry the lady."

"For my sake!" said Honor, with fine scorn. "What have I to do with it?"

"Everything," said John, equably. "I thought you said you'd marry me if I got Ken out of this scrape that he doesn't want to be out of; and if Mademoiselle Fanchette does, why, you can't, as I said before."

"Well, never mind me," said Miss Desmond, coolly. "I dare say when she knows you as well as I do, she won't want to marry you; but you must make her discard Ken. Can't you?"

John spoke more seriously.

"You have presented the matter from your own point of view and from Fanchette's. Now take Ken's. At the present, he's very glad to see me; he feels the old friendship strengthened, and when he comes back home, he would naturally look upon me as one of his oldest and best friends. I need hardly tell you that I prize his friendship, not only because he is near to you, but for his own sake. But look now, what you have laid out for me to do. I am to do my very best to destroy what he, no doubt, regards as his chief happiness—I am to make love to the woman he loves——"

"No," said Honor, resentfully, "I didn't say 'make love,' make presents."

"Beg pardon," replied Armstrong, unmoved, "the terms in this day and generation are synonymous. Naturally, he will be jealous—always was a jealous scamp. He will promptly hate me, perhaps want to fight me, and, worst of all, he will certainly sever all connection, in any shape, between the houses of Desmond and Armstrong. Do you care, Honor?"

Honor's face softened. With a happy disregard of all the

years in which they had gotten along very comfortably without each other, she imagined that she did care, and she said as much.

"You know, Jack," she said, gently, "your friendship is everything to me, and I wouldn't risk losing it, even for a time, if I were not positive Ken would see things differently when his infatuation is at an end."

"Well, so be it," said Armstrong. "I'll do my best, Honor, but don't be too disappointed if my heavier purse fails to weigh against Ken's general fascination. There are women, you know, who prefer a man to a pocket-book."

"Pshaw!" cried Honor, gayly, "but not this woman!"

"I hope, for your own sake, you may be right," said Armstrong, preparing to take his leave, and feeling considerably like a conspirator, or the wolf in the fold, when he thought of unsuspecting Ken and the engagement he had made with him.

But, after mature deliberation, he concluded that it would be better to lose no time in making the acquaintance of his proposed victim. He would see her that very night, and he felt that it would be less awkward to meet her under the auspices of some one other than Ken.

So, on reaching his rooms, he hastily arrayed himself in purple and fine linen, and sallied forth in search of the gilded youth, whom he had met, quite confident that some of them would be sure to know the dancer, if, indeed, she were as popular as Honor had implied.

Just as he fancied, the first man he met was in a position to oblige him, though he smiled peculiarly, when Armstrong, in the course of conversation, casually broached his desire.

"Know Fanchette?" said his friend. "But certainly; who does not? What! you, my friend? It shall be my pleasure to see that you are no longer ignorant of the most charming woman on the stage. Dancer? No, surely not. Actress, and with no little talent, though, at present, she has not the leading rôle. But you must know her. Come! Your only chance is between the acts. After the play is over, she disappears as effectually as if the earth had swallowed her. No one ever sees her, except at the theatre. By the way, it is reported that she is to marry a compatriot of yours, one Desmond, journalist or artist. But I hope not. It would be a thousand pities to throw herself away like that."

Armstrong walked along with mixed feelings.

If his friend were right, the task before him was considerably

more difficult than he had foreseen. Honor's description, evidently founded on hearsay, had led him to expect something entirely different from what he was evidently to meet. Meantime, his companion chattered briskly about a hundred different things, and when they reached the theatre, Armstrong had decided that he really could not oblige Honor. It was too much trouble. "No use to go in the house," said his friend. "This way, and wait till the first act is over," leading him, by tortuous ways, through narrow, dark passages, till they reached a badly-lighted, empty-looking room, round which lounged several species of green-room frequenters.

Among them Armstrong recognized Ken. He seemed not to mingle with the others and was moodily staring at a note he held; starting in evident surprise when John touched him on the shoulder and made him known to young Devigne.

"You didn't come to my rooms, as you agreed to," began Armstrong, boldly, devoutly hoping that the truth was with him, but feeling mighty doubtful, "so I thought I'd look you up, concluded, from what I'd heard, that I should find you here—" significantly.

Ken smiled. "Yes," he said, easily, "you must forgive me; I found, after you'd gone, that I'd make a subsequent engagement, so I was forced to break with you. Sorry, old fellow."

"Don't mention it," said John, blandly. "Engagements are brittle things, as I hope to be able to demonstrate."

Ken looked vaguely uneasy, but the entrance at that moment of several actresses caused an abrupt cessation of hostilities between old friends. Ken, with an air of proprietorship, at once advanced to the foremost, and proceeded to earnest conversation with her, with the note he still held, as a text; but not for long. Devigne and Armstrong advanced upon them, and next moment John was smiling into the most bewitching face he had ever yet met. Very fair, it was, with a dainty rose-color that varied as she spoke, even under the make-up; eyes of a dark blue-gray, the color that you sometimes meet in a man's eyes—seldom in a woman's—shaded by lashes long and black and curling—a dainty nose and a perfect mouth and teeth. The hair of the charmer was like condensed smoke—so soft and silky was it, but withal, perfectly free from gloss. John, somewhat bewildered by all these beauties, thought to himself, "If I only wanted a wife to look at, I'd be glad to marry her, myself. But I'd want to talk to her, sometimes, I suppose. Can she talk?"

—a point on which he was soon re-assured. She could talk, and very charmingly, too; much better than Armstrong could, and it was his business. In short, Armstrong was rapidly going the way of all flesh, which was exceedingly unfortunate for Armstrong's plans, the carrying out of which called for a clear head.

In the meanwhile, Kenneth, after an instant of surprised silence, turned to another member of the troupe and was soon the life of the jolly circle around him, till the recall sounded and the room was left once more to the outsiders. Ken then joined



Armstrong and Devigne and talked to them with such gay good-humor that Armstrong was at once astonished and relieved, and yet suspicious. They saw Fanchette no more until the end of the play and then she only showed for a moment, hooded and cloaked, and vanished as mysteriously as Devigne had said.

Armstrong awoke next morning, sane and in his right mind, ready to laugh at his enthrallment of the previous night, and yet conscious of feeling slightly envious of Ken and his long-established connection with the lovely actress. With an idea of restoring himself to his normal tone he took up a volume of essays that accompanied him always and read the first one he came to.



It chanced to be that well-known paper of a very brilliant writer, entitled "Concerning Infidelity," the first passage of which seemed to strike his case so nearly, that he threw the book aside and started to make his report to Honor.

He found that young woman in high spirits. Ken had been there, and from his very evident depression astute Honor argued that John had obeyed her behest and made the acquaintance of La Fanchette. Of course, Ken wouldn't like it.

"Well?" she said, expectantly.

"Well," returned John, "I met her. She isn't in the least what you said; except that she is extremely lovely. She's very bright, and evidently educated, and Ken is undoubtedly in love with her, but she doesn't care for him."

Honor flushed. She was evidently jealous for Ken. "Does she care for you?" she said, a little mockingly.

"Not yet," said John, modestly.

"Oh! Doubtless she *will* do so?"

"Sure to," sturdily.

Honor laughed. "You conceited wretch. I'm sure I hope she will, but I have my doubts. Do you"—airily—"care for her?"

"My dear Honor! If that isn't like a woman! Don't you know a man never, *never* rushes into things like that. I have seen the woman fifteen minutes. Of course I care for her."

"Oh, well!" said Honor, apologetically. "You needn't be so scornful about it. I've known men to fall in love in less time than that."

"You have probably known men who *said* they did. It took me longer than that the first time. Now I'm even wiser than I was then."

"Ah! 'a second Daniel'! But beware! O wiseacre! 'Pride goeth before destruction'—and your time is evidently near at hand. Don't say I didn't warn you!"

"Honor," said Armstrong, in abject tones of fear, "you frighten me. You make me feel that I am a stranger in a strange land. Won't you protect me? Won't you? Oh! Won't you marry me?"

"My dear boy," said Honor, "save Ken and I am yours."

"Honor bright?" queried John.

"Honor bright," assented Honor.

"Ken shall be saved. Against his most determined efforts he *must* be saved."

Honor smiled, and in a few minutes commanded Armstrong to go about his life-saving business, which the same he proceeded to do.

For the next two weeks John's head was in a whirl. He had seen Fanchette every night and Honor every morning. He stood in the peculiar position of a man who belongs secretly to one woman and is making every effort to annex another. That, in itself, is not so peculiar, is it? But the oddity lay in the fact that the first woman did all in her power to help him win the second.

By the end of the fortnight John had gone as far as Fanchette meant to let him go. He had not found that her charm decreased on better knowledge of her. She was in every way a very charming woman, and Armstrong was quite willing to be engaged to her—but to marry? No, not a French actress, however charming and circumspect.

Ken was hopelessly in the background, where, to Armstrong's discomfiture, it sometimes seemed that he might be sent to join him, according to Fanchette's caprices. But Ken still clung tenaciously to his charmer, though she seldom favored him with her attention nowadays, and John discovered, to his horror, that when she was kind to Ken, a demon of jealousy raged in his own breast.

Was he in love with two women? In vain he argued that one might worship both the sun and the moon without being in any way false to either, but he could not rid himself of the impression that he was a vacillating scoundrel who didn't know his own mind. In the morning, Honor was all the world to him. As soon as he saw Fanchette, he knew he was happy nowhere else. Fanchette had confided to him that ambition was her ruling passion; with love she wished nothing to do. She must marry rich, and form a company of which she should be leading lady. Society had no delights for her; she loved the stage with all the love she was capable of feeling.

All this she told him with a frankness that seemed very laudable—while she told him; and John discovered that the only part assigned to him in the drama was that of purse-bearer to Her Majesty, and while he looked at her, he was quite content to accept the rôle. When he saw Honor, he was not so content. But at the end of the fourth week Kenneth came to Honor, one day, looking more like the old Ken than he had for months. John had not been with her for two days, and she felt instinc-

tively that her brother's coming was connected in some way with Armstrong, a suspicion that was speedily verified.

"Honor," said Ken, presently, "do you remember Jack Armstrong—fellow who lived opposite to us at home?"

Honor started, a little surprised at his manner of referring to their old friend, but she signified that she did know the gentleman in question and remembered him perfectly, whereupon Ken unfolded his news to her.

"He was married last night," he said, lightly, "after the play, to a little actress, Fanchette. You may have heard of her," with the most innocent air in the world.

Honor bent a little more closely over the needlework she held. Ken should never know what it meant to her. Forcing herself to meet his eyes, she asked, calmly:

"Is it a case of 'they say,' Ken, or do you know it of your own knowledge?"

"Oh, I know it!" said Ken; "I was a witness."

Then, after a little silence, he went on gently:

"You never said anything to me, Honor, but—is he—were you—was he anything to you, dear?"

Honor looked surprised.

"Dear me! No," she said, "nothing at all. No more than Fanchette was to you!"



## HYPNOTISM \*

BY GEORGES DE TULLY



YOU are all alike, you Frenchmen; really you believe that all sciences, all curious discoveries emanate from your brains, when often you only bring to light what was once known."

Thus spoke my friend, Hamed-Pasha, a Parisian, though, by chance, born upon the shores of the Bosphorus. Of his native country, he preserves but two customs: namely, wearing the national fez; and smoking the white latakieh. As for the rest, this disciple of the prophet is a good-natured sceptic; literary, polished, and of charming mind. Ten years of Parisian life have dissipated nothing of that savor peculiar to Oriental natures easily inclined to Superstition and to Fatalism. "We were talking of hypnotism and of suggestion," added my friend, who was comfortably extended upon a low divan, watching vacantly the sweet fumes of his cigarette, mounting in blue spirals toward the ceiling. "You spoke of the remarkable progress which occult science has made in France the past few years. Well, if you would like, I will tell you an absolutely authentic story, which will prove to you that one hundred years ago, hypnotism was not only known in Turkey, but even practiced advantageously."

I accepted, and my friend, Hamed-Pasha, began:

No one has ever seen a similar epistle to that which the Pasha of Kars sent, one hundred years ago, to His Highness the Sultan Selim; third of that name. It was not written upon vellum nor upon parchment, it did not bear a wax-signet nor any seal whatever, but when the gracious Padishah received it he fell backward upon the thick carpet formed of the skins of Nubian lions.

This strange missive was composed of eight signs, which, taken together, formed two words of terrible signification, causing the Sultan frightful anger upon reading it. These two words were

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given out in the morning, at sunrise, by the Pasha of Kars, and at evening, when the last rays of the setting sun gilded the high minarets and the golden domes of the Mosques at Stamboul, like so many gigantic scarabees, the glorious Selim received the fearful message in his palace of Yidiz-Kiosk. How could these eight letters cross in a day the distance which separates Kars in Armenia from the Bosphorus? How could the missive of the Pasha, in a few hours, reach his august majesty, when the best cavalier, mounted upon the most rapid horse, could not accomplish the distance in less than eight days?

It happened that my ingenious ancestors, before the invention of the telegraph, contrived means of rapid communication. In the morning, by order of the Pasha, the sentinel who stood steadfast upon the highest battlement of the fort, took, in both hands, his long black mantle, and waved it once in the air. The soldiers on duty upon the rock of Muzurdagh made the same movement with their mantles, and from point to point, summit to summit, the entire length of the chain of Akdagh, as well as in the plain of Kyzyl, Irmach, and Scutari, one series of black mantles waved once in the air. The scribe of the Sultan, who stood attentively upon the highest tower of the palace, watching the horizon, upon seeing this sign, wrote, with the end of a pointed reed, which served for a pen, a B, upon the open parchment before him.

The sentinel at Kars reversed his mantle, and waved it again, showing the lining of a brilliant red. In less than an hour, from the Caucasus to the Golden Horn, several hundred mantles were waving the red signal; the scribe of the Sultan wrote an A upon the parchment. All day long the mantles continued to wave from the summits, sometimes red, sometimes black, following the code. At evening, when the muezzins were calling the faithful to prayer, the scribe of Selim wrote upon his parchment the last letter of the winged message from the Pasha of Kars.

“B A R U T J O K. Powder given out,” said the Pasha.

The news was serious; for, if the Pasha had no more powder, how could he repulse the assault of the Russians? He would have to surrender, and Kars, the key of the Caucasus, would fall into the hands of the soldiers of the great Catherine. The poor secretary of Selim thought of the consequences of the news, and slowly and timidly approached the apartments of his master. The unfortunate scribe had reason to fear, for scarcely had the Sultan glanced at the parchment, when, as a messenger

of bad news, the scribe received forty blows—five for each letter.

“Happily,” said the faithful servitor to himself, with that resigned philosophy which forms the Mussulman character, “the Pasha of Kars confined himself to a telegraphic style, for if he had used the usual formula: ‘Glory of the universe, master of all sovereigns, of all power, thy enchained slave, striking his humble forehead, the lowest before thy brilliant throne, which touches heaven, etc., etc.,’ I would be dead.”

This brutality only slightly appeased the anger of the Sultan, who now summoned his Grand Vizier. He was called Ibrahim, an old and ugly man, but very intelligent. When he entered, bent in executing the many salamaleks prescribed by etiquette, the amiable Padishah, instead of saluting, hit him on the head. This did not forebode an agreeable conversation, so he prostrated himself still lower to escape the storm.

“Ah! Rascal! Miscreant!” roared His Highness, greatly exasperated. “Is this the way you watch over my army? I am no longer astonished that the cursed Moscovites check our brave soldiers if all my generals are in the same predicament as my captain at Kars! Without powder, indeed! But explain how it happens that a fort as important as that of Kars should want ammunition?”

“Probably it has burned its last cartridge,” humbly suggested the Grand Vizier without daring to rise.

“You are an imbecile, Ibrahim. I have a mind to throw you in prison at once. If the Pasha has no powder, he probably has no money to buy it; so, to-morrow morning, at daybreak, you start out a caravan filled with a thousand purses of silver.”

“I have the purses, Gracious Majesty, but where shall I get the silver to fill them?”

“That does not concern me. Apply to my Greek banker, unless you prefer to ask the Persian financier, who lent me money the other day.”

“Your orders shall be obeyed, Your Majesty,” replied Ibrahim with humility. “To-morrow a thousand purses will set out for Kars.”

Happy to have escaped so easily, the Grand Vizier left the palace and proceeded slowly to the residence of the brave Hassan, from whom he expected to borrow the necessary money. This cunning Persian was a man of precaution, and never allowed

a sum of money to leave the bank without at first deducting an honest interest of twenty per cent. Thus, instead of one thousand purses, Hassan counted out only eight hundred; but the Sultan wanted a thousand, so the Grand Vizier signed a note for two thousand and received sixteen hundred.

Reaching home, the faithful Ibrahim took the superfluous six hundred and hid it under the mattress of the divan, then sent for the Khaznadar-Pasha, Treasurer-General, to confide the care of sending the silver into Asia Minor.

Ibrahim was a true Turkish functionary, and the sight of the little purses, methodically arranged on the carpet, made him reflect :

“You pretty silver things! You are destined to be devoured by the cannon! The noble metal of which you are made will go up in smoke, and shall I do nothing to stop this vandalism? No, Allah would not pardon me if I did not make the attempt. If I cannot save you all, at least it is my duty to protect some of you. Since the Pasha wishes to kill the Russians, he should put in two shells in each cannon, thus using only half as much powder; consequently, he does not need but half this sum.”

Thanks to this subtle reasoning, Ibrahim, finding his conscience at peace, hurried to put away five hundred purses under the mattress with the others.

What is most astonishing, when the Khaznadar took possession of the remaining five hundred he reflected also :

“O, Allah!” said he, “if the Pasha was not an imbecile he would know how to spare his ammunition. Instead of sending useless balls and bullets great distances, he ought to let the enemy approach, then massacre them with cartridges. Why should I prevent this brave Pasha from giving proof of his bravery? It is my duty to furnish an occasion for it. Then, here are two hundred and fifty purses for him and the same for me.”

The Karavanbachi—chief of the caravan—said in turn : “Two hundred and fifty purses are too heavy for one camel, and too light for two. I know I ought not to maltreat an animal, the Koran forbids it. My duty is then to divide this sum evenly.”

It was done.

The Janizary, who set out with some soldiers to escort the camel loaded with the one hundred and twenty-five purses, unceremoniously helped himself to half the load, deeming it useless to trouble his subaltern mind with ingenious reasoning.

Reaching Kars unimpeded, he placed the sixty-two and one-half purses at the feet of the Pasha.

"Sixty-two purses and a half," said the captain to himself. "That is very little to buy ammunition. What will I do? Ah! I will give it to my secretary, who complained just now of having no more sand to dry his writing. In this way one of us at least will have what is wanting."

He called his secretary, and said to him: "The Sultan, our glorious sovereign, is a master who lets nothing escape him. He has learned you needed sand for your writing, and he has sent you sixty-two purses and a half, full of white pieces, with which you can buy sand and fill your office for several years."

Eight days later, the Pasha of Kars sent to his majesty the Sultan Selim, a new winged message, laconic and terrible. The mantles of the sentinels were not waved very long from the summits. Three signs sufficed to transmit the fatal news: "Taken." Kars was taken.

The unfortunate Pasha was sent at once to Constantinople, and thrown into prison. During the several days, which were spent in the dungeon, the ex-governor of Kars had the pleasure of reflecting upon his situation, and of preparing his defense. One morning they brought him before His Highness. The Pasha allowed the reproaches which his master heaped upon him, on entering, to pass unnoticed, then, when he judged the anger of the terrible Sultan had subsided somewhat, he began to plead his cause boldly and frankly.

"You say, Light of the Faithful, that you sent me one thousand purses to enable me to buy some powder. Now, if I had received them, I would have been able to check the Russians. Kars would still belong to Your Majesty. I swear upon the Koran I received only sixty-two purses and a half. Here is a mystery which at first appears incomprehensible, but upon reflecting a little the explanation is easy. If you will permit your faithful servant to give it, you will speedily see that he is not guilty. You sent me one thousand purses, but only sixty-two and one-half reached me; it is because the sum has been divided by two four times. In other terms, you have been robbed four times, glorious Padishah. Now, if you desire to know the names of the robbers, nothing would be more easy. They are those through whose hands the money passed.

"The first is surely the Grand Vizier, who pocketed five hundred purses.



"The second could only be the Khaznadar who took two hundred and fifty.

"The third would be the Karavanbachi, who carried off one hundred and twenty-five. And the fourth must be the Janizary of the escort, who kept sixty-two and a half. See, great Seigneur, how simple that is?"

During all this discourse, the Sultan Selim remained quiet, then spoke in a perfectly composed manner:

"Very well, Ali; you are a good soldier and a loyal servant, who has not yet learned the art of lying. You will reënter my good graces, and I will return all your grades and privileges. As for this miserable Ibrahim, the first and greatest robber of the four, he will pay dearly for his infamous action. I will teach him what the Sultan Selim does to a Grand Vizier who has the audacity to rob his master. You go, my faithful Ali, and find him this evening before the hour of prayer, and present to him this noose of red silk. He will understand. Go!"

For the first time in his life, Ali-Pacha paled upon hearing this sentence of death pronounced in so tranquil a tone. To strike an enemy in the face, with arms, when he could defend himself; to struggle with a warrior who was armed as well as he, was for him only pleasure; but to send some one into the other world with a little silk cord revolted him. However, the order of the Sultan was absolute; he must submit. So the brave Ali left the palace, wondering how he should execute the sentence.

In his sumptuous palace of Ortakoe, whose terraced gardens descended to the sea, the Grand Vizier, Ibrahim, reposed, leaning against a pile of pillows, fingering his amber beads; before him, in a basin, burned a perfumed mixture, whose fragrance filled the place.

Suddenly the heavy hanging which concealed the door lifted, and Ali-Pasha entered. Upon seeing before him one whom he believed was still in prison, Ibrahim felt a sinister presentiment. "Let your last hour be happy," said Ali, in a grave voice, stopping upon the sill.

Ibrahim did not misunderstand the sense of these words; he knew by the salute that Ali could be only a messenger of death, and that he held concealed in the folds of his cafetan the terrible silken noose. Still the face of Ibrahim remained passive; his eyes burned a little brighter. Slowly, he said: "Allah wishes it! Allah is powerful! We are at his feet only miserable worms of

the dust. Let his will be accomplished! Render me this last service of waiting a moment, and let me finish my ablutions and my prayers. You know Mahomet has proclaimed sacred the vows of the dying."

"Your pardon," replied Ali, "but my orders are absolute. I can not lose you from sight a moment. Moreover, what good would it do you to leave the room? Look out of the window! there are more than a thousand janizaries surrounding your palace. Do you not hear the clash of arms? They are the guards of His Majesty, who have invaded your palace. You see it is in vain, to try to escape."

"Of which I never dreamed," replied Ibrahim. "Reassure yourself, Ali, I will not keep you waiting long; please be seated."

He struck his hands three times, and two Nubian slaves appeared. They tremblingly brought in a ewer and a basin, and a prayer-rug.

Ibrahim then raised his mantle and slowly made his ablutions; no one would have thought, seeing him so calm, that in a few minutes the fatal cord would encircle his white neck. Outside, upon the high minarets of the city, the muezzins intoned their soft and monotonous chant announcing to the faithful the decline of day.

While the Grand Vizier plunged his head in the basin, Ali, thrusting his hand under his cafetan, drew out the cord of red silk, and placed it in the hand of one of the slaves. The slaves understood.

Upon delivering this deadly noose, which he would receive again only after its mission was accomplished, the soldier trembled. He had seen thousands of men fall upon the battle-field without flinching, but upon contemplating this full, plump face, which in a few minutes would be only an inert mass, he was horrified. Ah! a terrible business that of an executioner!

While Ali-Pasha was thus sadly reflecting, the Grand Vizier finished his ablutions. With slow, measured and majestic step, he advanced toward the prayer-rug, upon which he stood with his head high and proud, his body erect, in order to isolate himself from the rest of the world, so that no terrestrial noise should interrupt his ecstatic meditations.

The Grand Vizier very slowly raised his arms, and placed the palms of his hands over his ears. His large black eyes, burning with a strange fire, rested upon Ali-Pasha. The brave captain, nervous and troubled, did not know how to account for

this singular attitude. Why did not the doomed man say his prayers, like a good Musselman? Why did those eyes, which gleamed in the dark like the dagger of an assassin, rest upon him?

The poor Pasha did not seek the key of the mystery very long; little by little a strange, inexplicable happiness overcame him, it seemed to him that his body and his mind, detached from terrestrial things, floated in the pure regions of ether, softly cradled by perfumed zephyrs. Slowly his eyes closed, his head inclined upon his breast and, leaning against the divan where he had fallen, he slept.

Ibrahim, finally abandoning his meditative attitude, approached Ali and raised one of his eyelids—the eye was without expression or life.

“He sleeps,” cried the Grand Vizier, with a triumphant joy. Then, seating himself gravely upon the divan in front of his victim, whom he watched constantly, Ibrahim began the following recital, articulating each word slowly, as if he wished to thoroughly engrave the words upon the mind of his auditor:

“When I first delivered the fatal news, he made his ablutions, then prayed prostrated as the Koran prescribes. His prayer finished, he seated himself upon a divan, and taking from the slave the cord he made a sliding knot, passing it around his neck. He looked at me for the last time, crossed his arms upon his breast and made a sign to the slaves, who seized each an end of the cord and drew it with all their might. It was a horrible sight; his face swelled out, reddened, then grew purple; his eyes left their orbits; his tongue hung out of his mouth black and lifeless. The slaves redoubled their efforts; one would have thought the soul hesitated to leave its earthy habitation. Finally, a last jolt, a supreme convulsion, the head fell back, the arms dropped inert, it was over. One of the slaves detached the cord. What a horrible black mark it left in the white flesh! They covered the corpse with a mantle. Your justice was satisfied, O Sublime Sultan.

When Ibrahim had finished his recital, he extended himself on the ground, one of the slaves covered him with his mantle, then approaching Ali-Pasha, he struck him twice upon his face.

The brave Captain opened his eyes and looked around as though he had a painful dream. The slave, inclining profoundly before him returned the red noose. This movement completely recalled to his mind the order of the Sultan, and seizing the

fatal cord Ali concealed it in his breast. Then, rising, he glanced furtively upon the human form stretched under the mantle, and advanced toward the door.

"Pardon, noble Pasha," said the slave, "would you not like to see him?"

"Never, unfortunate one," replied Ali, with horror. "I should never sleep again." He went out, and signed to the officer to retire with his men.

"Death has no need of a sentinel," said he. The chief of the janizaries and Ali mounted horses and set off in the direction of Yidiz-Kiosk.

"Peace be with him," said the faithful servant to the gracious Sultan Selim, when reciting the details of the death of the Grand Vizier.

"You say the agony was very long?" added the Padishah.

"Terrible, Your Majesty," responded Ali. "One would have thought he had seven souls nailed to his body."

"Glorious Majesty," added Ali, "I am your faithful slave; I am ready to suffer death for you. Say the word and I will meet death, without trembling, in the midst of shot and shell, but, I beg you, never send me on a like mission."

"Be tranquil, my brave Ali, thy prayer shall be answered. But thou art my faithful servant. Another might have let this cunning rascal escape; he was a great krave, between you and me. The clemency of Allah descend upon him," added Selim in a funereal tone.

At midnight, when the moon concealed her silver disk behind the mountains, a fine "tartan" with its dark sails, glided rapidly and silently upon the gentle waves of the Bosphorus. Upon the decks, the ex-Grand Vizier, Ibrahim, surrounded by his wives and children, was seated.

"Confess, my sweet Kadite," said Ibrahim to the eldest of his companions, "that it would have been too beastly to die for five hundred purses of silver. Once again have I cause to know that I made a good purchase when I bought you at the market at Cairo. It was you that revealed to me the secret of the women of Egypt, this secret, thanks to which one can put to sleep his neighbor. It is not at all difficult, and I am astonished there are so few who know how to practice this precious art.

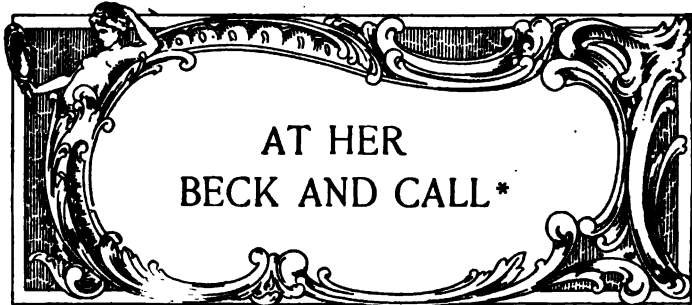
"To put that poor Ali to sleep was only child's-play. I would like to know what punishment His Highness will inflict upon him

when, wishing to proceed with my interment, he will perceive that I have fooled them. Poor Ali! What a pity he is so honest! I could have taken him with me. The Tsarine would have made him a colonel, as she will make me a general. The great Catherine is a good and hospitable person, especially to Turks, particularly when they know the secrets of all the strong places of the Danube."

With these hopeful words Ibrahim stretched himself upon the mats and slept the sleep of the just.

"Well," said my friend Hamed, after finishing his recital, "do you still pretend that hypnotism is a recent invention, improved by nervous Parisians? and do you think we Turks need the experiences of Doctor Gilder in order to probe the secrets of suggestive science?"





AT HER  
BECK AND CALL\*

BY FLORA ANNIE STEELE



"WHAT is your name?" I asked.

"Phooli-jân, Huzoor," she answered, with a brilliant, dazzling smile.

I sat looking at her, wondering if a more appropriate name could have been found for that figure among the anemones and celandines—the primulas, pansies and pinks—the thousand-and-one blossoms which, glowing against their groundwork of forget-me-nots, formed a jewel-mosaic right to the foot of the snows above us. Flowerful life! Truly that was hers. She had a great bunch of scarlet rhododendron stuck behind her ear, matching the cloth cap perched jauntily on her head, and as she sat herding her buffaloes on the upland she had threaded chaplet on chaplet of ox-eyed daisies, and hung them about her wherever they could be hung. The result was distinctly flowerful; her face, also, distinctly pretty, distinctly clean for a Kashmiri girl's. But coquette, flirt, minx, was written in every line of it, and accounted for a most unusual neatness and brightness.

She caught my eye and smiled again, broadly, innocently.

"The Huzoor would like to paint my picture, wouldn't he?" she went on, in a tone of certainty. "The Sahib who came last year gave me five rupees. I will take six this year. Food is dear, and those base-born contractors of the Maharajah seize everything—one walnut in ten, one chicken in ten."

But I was not going to be beguiled into the old complaints I could hear any and every day from the hags in the village. Up here on the *murg*, within a stone's-throw of the first patch of snow picketing the outskirts of the great glacier of Gwashbrari, I liked, if possible, to forget how vile man could be in the little

\* A selection from "The Sketch."

shingle huts clustering below by the river. I will not describe the place. To begin with, it defies description, and next, could I even hint at its surpassing beauty, the globe-trotter would come and defile it. It is sufficient to say that a *murg* is an upland meadow or alp, and that this one, with its forget-me-nots and sparkling glaciers, was like a turquoise set in diamonds. I had seated myself on a projecting spur, whence I could sketch a frowning defile northwards, down which the emerald-green river was dashing madly among huge rocks crowned by pine-trees.

"I will give five rupees also; that is plenty," I remarked suavely, and Phooli-jân smiled again.

"It must do, for I like being painted. Only a few Sahibs come, very few; but whenever they see me they want to paint me and the flowers, and it makes the other girls in the village angry. Then Goloo and Chuchchu——" Here she went off into a perfect cascade of smiles, and began to pull the eyelashes off the daisies deliberately. There seems a peculiar temptation for cruelty towards flowers in girlhood all over the world, and Phooli-jân was pre-eminently girlish. She looked eighteen, but I doubt if she was really more than sixteen. Even so, it was odd to find her unappropriated, so I inquired if Goloo or Chuchchu was the happy man.

"My mother is a widow," she replied, without the least hesitation. "It depends which will pay the most, for we are poor. There are others, too, so there is no hurry. They are at my beck and call."

She crooked her forefinger and nodded her head as if beckoning to some one. For sheer light-hearted, innocent enjoyment of her own attraction I never saw the equal of that face. I should have made my fortune if I could have painted it there in the blazing sunlight, framed in flowers; but it was too much for me. Therefore, I asked her to move to the right, further along the promontory, so that I could put her in the foreground of a picture I had already begun.

"There, by that first clump of iris," I said, pointing to a patch of green sword-leaves, where the white and lilac blossoms were beginning to show.

She gave a perceptible shudder.

"What? Sit on a grave! Not I. Does not the Huzoor know that those are graves? It is true. All our people are buried here. We plant the iris over them always. If you ask why, I know not. It is the flower of death."

A sudden determination to paint her, the Flowerful Life against the Flowerful Death, completely obliterated the knowledge of my own incompetence; but I urged and bribed in vain. Phooli-jân would not stir. She would not even let me pick a handful of the flowers for her to hold. It was unlucky; besides, one never knew what one might find in the thickets of leaves—bones and horrid things. Had I never heard that dead people got tired of their graves and tried to get out, or even if they only wanted something in their graves they would stretch forth a hand to get it? That was one reason why people covered them up with flowers—just to make them more contented.

The idea of stooping to cull a flower and shaking hands with a corpse was distinctly unpleasant, even in the sunlight, so I gave up the point and began to sketch the girl as she sat. Rather a difficult task, for she chattered incessantly. Did I see that thin blue thread of smoke in the dark pall of pine-trees covering the bottom of the valley? That was Goloo's fire. He was drying orris root for the Maharajah. There, on the opposite *murg*, where the buffaloes showed dark among the flowers was Chuchchu's hut. Undoubtedly, Chuchchu was the richer, but Goloo could climb like an ibex. It was he whom the Huzoor was going to take as a guide to the peak. He could dance, too. The Huzoor should see him dance the circle dance round the fire—no one turned so slowly as Goloo. He would not frighten a young lamb, except when he was angry—well, jealous, if the Huzoor thought that were better.

By the time she had done chattering there was not a petal left on the ox-eyed daisies, and I was divided between pity and envy towards Goloo and Chuchchu.

That evening, as usual, I set my painting to dry on the easel at the door of the tent. As I lounged by the camp fire, smoking my pipe, a big young man, coming in with a jar of buffalo milk on his shoulder and a big bunch of red rhododendron behind his ear, stopped and grinned at my caricature of Phooli-jân. Five minutes after, down by the servants' encampment, I heard a free fight going on, and strolled over to see what was the matter. After the manner of Kashmiri quarrels, it had ended almost as it began; for the race love peace. That it had so ended was not, however, I saw at a glance, the fault of the smaller of the antagonists, who was being forcibly held back by my *shikari*.

"Chuchchu, that man there, wanted to charge Goloo, this man here, the same price for milk as he does your honor," explained



the *shikari* elaborately. "That was extortionate, even though Goloo, being the Huzoor's guide for to-morrow, may be said to be your honor's servant for the time. I have settled the matter justly. The Huzoor need not give thought to it."

I looked at the two recipients of Phooli-jân's favor with interest—for that the bunches of red rhododendron they both wore were her gift I did not doubt. They were both fine young men, but Goloo distinctly the better-looking of the two, if a trifle sinister.

Despite the recommendation of my *shikari* to cast thought aside, the incident lingered in my memory, and I mentioned it to Phooli-jân when, on returning to finish my sketch, I found her waiting for me among the flowers. Her smile was more brilliant than ever.

"They will not hurt each other," she said. "Chuchchu knows that Goloo is more active, and Goloo knows that Chuchchu is stronger. It is like the dogs in our village."

"I was not thinking of them," I replied. "I was thinking of you. Supposing they were to quarrel with you?"

She laughed. "They will not quarrel. In summer-time there are plenty of flowers for everybody."

I thought of these red rhododendrons, and could not repress a smile at her barefaced wisdom of the serpent.

"And in the winter-time?"

"Then I will marry one of them, or someone. I have only to choose. That is all. They are at my beck and call."

Three years passed before recurring leave enabled me to pay another visit to the *murg*. The rhododendrons were once more out on the uplands, and as I turned the last corner of the pine-set path which threaded its way through the defile, I saw the meadow before me, with its mosaic of flowers bright as ever. The memory of Phooli-jân came back to me as she had sat in the sunshine nodding and beckoning.

"Phooli-jân?" echoed the old patriarch who came out to welcome me as I crossed the plank bridge to the village. "Phooli-jân, the herd-girl? Huzoor, she is dead; she died from picking flowers. A vain thing. It was at the turn beyond the *murg*, Huzoor, half-way between Chuchchu's hut and Goloo's drying stage. There is a big rhododendron tree hanging over the cliff, and she fell down. It must be three years gone."

Three years; then it must have happened almost immediately

after I left the valley. The idea upset me; I knew not why. It seemed to dim the sunshine. The *murg* without that Flowerful Life nodding and beckoning felt empty. I was glad that I had arranged not to remain there for the night, but to push on to another meadow, some six miles farther up the river. To do so, however, I required a fresh relay of coolies, and while my *shikari* was arranging for this in the village I made my way by a cross-cut to the promontory, with its patches of iris.

Deaths are rare in these small communities, and there were but two or three new graves—all but one too recent to be poor Phooli-jân's. That, then, must be hers, with its still clearly defined oblong of iris, already a mass of pale purple and white.

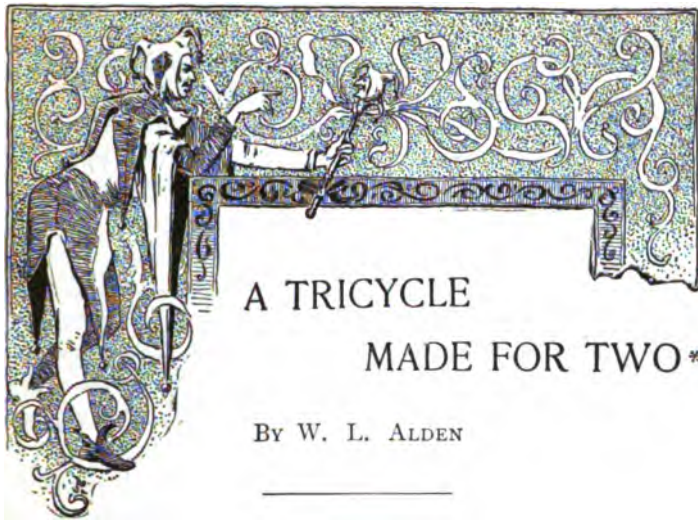
I sat down on a rock, and began, unromantically, to eat my lunch, finishing up with a pull at my flask, and thus providentially fortified, I stooped, ere leaving, to pick one or two of the blossoms from the grave, intending to paint them round the sketch of the girl's head which I had with me.

Great Heavens! what was that?

I turned positively sick with horror and doubt. Was it a hand? It was some time before I could force myself to set aside the sheathing leaves and settle the point. Something it was—something which, even as I parted the stems, fell to pieces, as the skeleton of a beckoning hand might have done. I did not stay to see more; I let the flowers close in over it—whatever it was—and made my way back to the village. My baggage, having changed shoulders, was streaming out over the plank bridge again, and in the two first bearers, carrying my cook-room pots and pans, I recognized Goloo and Chuchchu. They had both grown stouter, and wore huge bunches of red rhododendron behind their ears. I found out, on inquiry, that they were both married and had become bosom friends.

I have not seen the turquoise set in diamonds since, but I often think of it, and wonder what it was I saw among the iris. And then I seem to see Phooli-jân sitting among the flowers, nodding her head and saying, "They are at my beck and call."

If I were Goloo or Chuchchu, I would be buried somewhere else.



STREET organ was playing "A Bicycle Made for Two," and as we listened sadly, and wondered how long England would be permitted to be the refuge of Anarchists and organ-grinders, the Colonel remarked to no one in particular, "A bicycle made for two may do well enough in this country, but if you Britishers had ever seen Professor Van Wagener's tricycle made for two, you would never think of singing about any kind of bicycle."

"I think I was telling you the other day," continued the Colonel, "about Professor Van Wagener, the great electrical sharp, who used to live next door to me in New Berlinopolisville. A mighty clever man he was in many other directions than that of electricity. He was always inventing something. I have known that man to get up at four o'clock on a winter's morning and invent straight along till noon. Show him a piece of machinery, I don't care what it might be, and he would instantly go to work to improve it.

"I had a reaping-machine in my field, and one day the Professor happened to see it. Nothing would satisfy him but to put an attachment to that machine so that it would gather the straw into bundles, and tie them neatly around the middle with ropes which were to be twisted out of straw by a second attachment to the machine. He worked at that idea for several months, until he got it to suit him. Then he built a brand new machine with his two attachments, and took it into my field to

exhibit it. He was so proud of it that he sent out written invitations to about all his acquaintances to come and see it, and he told me that this time he had made an invention that was going to make his fortune and give him a reputation that would lie over any other man's, except, perhaps, George Washington's.

"The machine was a big, clumsy-looking affair, and was run by a horse that had a sort of stall in about the middle of it, where he couldn't play any tricks, and where the machine couldn't play any tricks on him. The Professor had his wife with him and his wife's cousin, who was a very pretty girl, though I don't believe Van Wagener ever noticed that anything was pretty unless it was some sort of scientific apparatus. The horse was started up, and the machine began to reap and to tie up bundles of straw, just as the Professor had said it would do. His wife's cousin wanted to see just how the thing worked, so he took her alongside of the machine, and before they fairly knew what was the matter the machine had tied the Professor and the girl into a bundle, and tied them so tight that they could hardly breathe. Naturally the people who had been invited to see the machine work, rushed up to help the Professor and the young woman, and presently that machine had most of the leading citizens of New Berlinopolisville tied up in neat bundles, and lying around on the ground calling for help, except such of them as had been wrapped round with straw, and were too nearly suffocated to speak. The machine kept on its way, seeking for more citizens and more straw, until some man had sense enough to stop the horse, and so put an end to the performance. There isn't any manner of doubt that it was a talented machine, but when the leading citizens had been set free, they seemed very much prejudiced against it. Some of them were for killing the Professor, and some of them were for killing the horse, but they finally compromised, and arranged their differences by smashing the machine into scrap iron, and informing the Professor that if he ever calculated to build another one, he had better dig his grave first, and sit close to the edge of it. I can't say that I blame them very much, for when a man is violently tied up with some other man whom he don't particularly like, or with some other man's wife, knowing all the time that the woman's husband is spry with his weapons and unwilling as a general rule to argue a matter until after he has got through shooting, it stands to reason that he won't feel particularly friendly to the machine that has done the tying. I never heard any more about that machine from the Professor, and it's my belief

that when his wife got him home she let him know that he couldn't be tied up in the same bundle with a good-looking cousin without inviting the just indignation of a virtuous and devoted wife.

"Another time the Professor was taking a drive with me in my buggy, and it struck him as a bright idea that the bit and reins ought to be superseded by electricity. So he goes to work and invents a new way of driving a horse by pressing buttons instead of pulling on the reins. He had wires running from the seat of his wagon to different parts of the horse. You pressed one button, and the horse got a shock on the right side of his face that made him turn to the left. You pressed another button, and a shock on the left cheek turned him to the right. A wire connecting with his tail was used to stir him up instead of a whip, and a strong current sent into his forelegs was expected to make him stop dead still whenever it was turned on. All these currents came from a battery under the seat of the wagon, and the buttons that turned them on were let into the seat on either side of the driver.

"Van Wagener took his wife out to drive in this new style of wagon as soon as he got it perfected, and to all appearances it worked very well. He stopped in front of Dr. Smith's drug store, which was our leading drug store at the time, though afterwards the proprietor was crusaded by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, who smashed all his whiskey bottles and knocked out the heads of his whiskey barrels, and left nothing in his establishment except a few medicine bottles and a little perfumery. Well, as I was saying, the Professor stopped in front of the drug store, and Mrs. Van Wagener climbed down and bought some mustard-plasters, or something of the sort, and then climbed into the wagon again. She was a middling heavy woman, which was a little strange, considering how strict she was in matters of morality and religion, for your strict woman is nearly always more or less bony, and she sat down on the seat with considerable force, and directly on the top of about half the electric buttons, she having forgot all about them. The horse couldn't quite understand the signals, but when he felt a current setting up his spine and another in his left cheek, and another in his right cheek, he saw that as a matter of self-respect he ought to kick that wagon to flinders, and accordingly he started in to do it. The Professor yelled to him to whoa, and he turned on all his electricity at once, hoping to shock the horse into some sort

of paralysis, but it didn't work. The horse just kicked the whole front of the wagon into smithereens, and when he struck the battery and spilt the acids over his legs, he remembered that he had an engagement in the next county, and he started to keep it at a pace of about thirty miles an hour. It didn't much matter to the Professor and his wife, who had been scattered all over the neighborhood when the horse's heels first struck the seat, but when they came to, and Smith had plastered them up with brown paper and arnica, Van Wagener remarked that, in his opinion, horses were played out, and that in this age electricity ought to be made to take the place of such a grossly unscientific animal."

The Colonel paused, and pulled his hat down over his eyes as was his custom when he had finished speaking and desired to smoke in silence. He was reminded by Thompson that, however interesting his reminiscences of Professor Van Wagener might be, they had not yet included the promised account of the tricycle made for two.

"Beg your pardon, gentlemen," said the Colonel. "I clean forgot about that. The truth is, when I get to remembering about the Professor's inventions there are so many of them that I generally forget the particular one I started out to tell about. It's the same way with this hyer village of London. I've started out half a dozen times to go to see the Tower, and I strike so many things that interest me that I have never yet got there. Take your cigar shops, for instance. Why, they are fifty years behind the age, and when I go into one I get talking with the proprietor, and trying to show him the error of his ways, till first I know it's too late to go anywhere.

"But about this hyer tricycle. When bicycles and tricycles came to New Berlinopolisville, the Professor was mightily interested in them. Not that he admired them, but because, as he said, they were unscientific. He demonstrated with not more than half a slateful of figures that it took more exertion to drive a bicycle a mile than it would take to run that mile with a man's own legs. There was no getting around his figures. They proved that a man weighing a hundred and forty pounds and driving an ordinary bicycle at the rate of ten miles an hour consumed, say, five hundred foot pounds of energy—if anybody knows what that means, and I don't much believe anybody does. Well, the same man could run a mile with the consumption of only four hundred pounds, leaving a surplus of a hundred pounds for the benefit of the poor. 'If these young fel-

lows that I see on bicycles had any sense,' said Van Wagener, 'they would drive their machines by electricity, and avoid the awful consumption of energy.' No sooner had this idea struck him than he proceeded to invent an electric engine for bicycles, and in the course of the summer he had his invention worked out to his own satisfaction.

"The engine and the storage battery took up a good deal of space, and so the Professor, instead of applying it to a bicycle, built a big tricycle with seats for two, and fitted his engine to that. He calculated that it would drive the machine for twelve hours at a speed of fifteen miles on a level, and that it would carry two persons weighing in the aggregate 500 lbs. with perfect ease. When the machine was all finished the Professor wheeled it out of the yard and down to a turn in the road where Mrs. Wagener couldn't see him, and made ready for a start. You see his wife was prejudiced against his inventions, and always said that he should never try experiments with new inventions so long as she could prevent it. Just as the Professor was climbing aboard the tricycle, Widow Dumfries comes along, and, being young and full of spirits, besides being a mighty sociable sort of woman, she told Van Wagener that it looked mighty selfish for him to start out alone, and that if he wanted to be real accommodating he would give her a little ride on his machine. The Professor never could say no, except to another scientific person; and so he told Mrs. Dumfries to get into the front seat and he would take her down to her house, which was about a quarter of a mile down the road.

"The machine went along all right, and the Professor worked his way cautiously along the main street with his brake on most of the time; but as soon as he got in the outskirts of the town he turned on the full current and let her whiz. The widow was delighted, and said that she had never enjoyed anything half so much in all her life. Pretty soon the machine came to a middling steep descent in the road, and the Professor started to shut off the current and put on his brake. But there was something wrong about his levers. He couldn't shut off the current to save his life, and when he put the brake hard on, hoping that it would stop the thing, the brake broke.

"They tell me that the tricycle went down that hill at about sixty miles an hour; that is, after it got well under headway, you understand. Nothing that Van Wagener could do had any effect in slowing it down. The engine was working for all it

was worth, and she meant to keep on working according to contract. When the tricycle struck the level ground she slowed down to about eighteen miles an hour, for the Professor had given her rather more power than he had intended to give her. There weren't any hills or any ascents worth mentioning for the machine to climb, for Berlinopolisville is about six hundred feet above the lake, and the road that the Professor had taken keeps descending all the way.

“When the Professor found that he couldn't stop the tricycle, he was a pretty badly frightened man. He couldn't possibly throw himself off without mixing himself all up with the wheels, and breaking most of his bones. Besides, he couldn't desert the widow in any such way as that. You may ask why he didn't turn the machine round, and steer for home. The reason was that he couldn't possibly turn it at the speed it was running at without capsizing the whole concern. The only thing he could possibly do was to keep in the middle of the road, and let the machine run till the power was exhausted, which, if he had made no mistake in his calculation, wouldn't be less than twelve hours.

“Mrs. Dumfries enjoyed the thing at first, but after a little while she suspected that something was wrong. The Professor told her that he was sorry to say that he couldn't stop the tricycle, but that if she sat tight, and they had middling good luck, he calculated that they wouldn't come to any great harm. The widow wasn't easily frightened. She reflected that she had on her best pair of shoes and stockings, and declared that if there was to be an accident she would have to make the best of it. The longer the ride lasted the less chance there seemed to be of running into anything, for the teams that the Professor and Mrs. Dumfries did meet mostly went into the ditch on one side of the road or the other, before the tricycle had a chance to run into them. The Professor, being a kind-hearted man, and disliking profane language, was considerably troubled when he saw a horse and buggy, or, maybe, a pair of horses and loaded wagon, pile up in the ditch, and heard the remarks that the driver made—that is, in those cases where he was in a condition to make remarks; but he couldn't stop to explain or apologize.

“It was about nine o'clock in the morning when the tricycle started, and about two o'clock Mrs. Dumfries was about as tired and as hungry as they make 'em. She called to the Professor



and asked him to tell her the truth about the time it would take the machine to run down. He told her that, if he hadn't made any miscalculation, she would run till about nine o'clock that night; but that it was a bright moonlight night, and he thought everything would go well, unless there should happen to be a turnpike gate on the road, and it should happen to be closed. At that the widow broke down, and, leaning back with her head on the Professor's waistcoat, fainted away. All he could do was to hold her tight with one arm, so that she couldn't slip off the machine, and to steer with the other hand. Just then he began to meet friends and acquaintances. He afterwards told me that it seemed as if there was a procession of them coming up the road, and before they went off into the ditch they all recognized the Professor, and he heard several of them say, 'Why, that there ain't Mrs. Van Wagener! Well, I never would have thought it!' or similar remarks, showing a want of confidence in the Professor's motives. He tried to call out to two or three people whom he knew very well that the machine had run away with him, but they mostly misunderstood him, and said, when they got back to town, that Van Wagener had up and told them in so many words that he was running away with the widow.

"Night came along and the moon came up, but the road was lined with trees, and it was fair to middling dark. Mrs. Dumfries had come to long before this; but she had lost her temper, and told the Professor he was a brute, and that her brother would settle with him for his outrageous conduct. Once a man hailed the tricycle and ordered it to stop, and, finding that it would not stop, fired three revolver shots after it, without, however, doing any harm. Once the machine ran into an old woman who was crossing the road, and was either deaf or blind, but there wasn't very much of her, and the tricycle went over her like a horse taking a low fence. If it hadn't been for the excitement of the ride, and the thought of what the consequences would probably be when Mrs. Van Wagener should come to know about it, the Professor would probably have dropped exhausted, for he wasn't a very strong man. However, he held out well, and about nine o'clock, just as the machine was approaching a tavern that stood alongside of the road, the current gave out and the tricycle stopped.

"There wasn't any other house nearer than four miles, and there was the Professor and Mrs. Dumfries, nearly two hundred

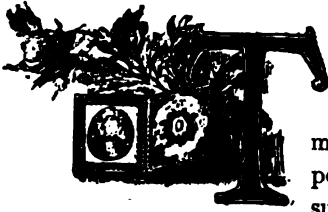
miles from New Berlinopolisville, and about as tired, and about as hungry, and about as mad as any two people ever were. Of course they had to stop at the tavern till morning, and it took them two more days to get home, partly by stage coach and partly by rail. When they did get home the Professor found that Mrs. Van Wagener had gone to her mother's, leaving word with a neighbor that she should begin proceedings for a divorce at once, and that the widow's brother had started out with his Winchester rifle, remarking to the Professor's friends that they could make arrangements for the funeral at once, and that he would send the body on to them at their expense, if they so desired.

"The end of it all was that I went to see the widow, and then I hunted up Mrs. Van Wagener, and finally explained things so that the Professor's wife came back again, and the widow's brother allowed that he was satisfied that it was a case which didn't require any shooting. But after that you could never get the Professor to listen to the word tricycle, which was a pity, for in my opinion there was a fortune in that invention of his if it had been properly put on the market. But that's the way with these scientific men. When they make a good invention they don't know it, and when they invent something that is of no earthly use they spend their bottom dollar trying to get people to take an interest in it."



## NAOMI \*

BY JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY



TWO girls were sitting in Miss Redheath's garret on a rainy April afternoon.

There is something about the atmosphere of a country garret that is peculiarly attractive to most people—the suggestions of half-told tales and household mysteries of bygone days, of simple happiness and homely sorrows. This garret, however, seemed to consider itself above all such possibilities. Its corners, dim, but swept and garnished, harbored neither romance nor cobwebs; its window-panes let in the clear gray light of the present century. Its neatly arranged specimens of disabled furniture were suggestive only of respectable old age in prosaic circumstances.

"Oh, for a single spider!" sighed the younger of the two girls, brushing her fingers across the top of a commonplace old desk.

"I hardly wonder that aunt looked astonished when we begged her to let us rummage this immaculate spot for amusement. There is nothing interesting here at all. Old almanacs, instead of missing wills; dried catnip and lavender in place of faded flowers; not a shoe, not a fan, not a single pumpkinhood! If there ever was a sword here, it has been banished lest it should injure somebody; if there ever was a flowered muslin gown, it has been cut down into pinafores for the Millcote orphans, whom we have with us always!"

"How strange it seems, Ruth," said the other girl, in a low voice, "that she could live here all her life, contented just to cut those 'pinafores for the Millcote orphans' and to give away shoes and to go to church Sundays."

"Aunt must have been strangely constituted," replied Ruth. "But so many New England women are. They are so unquestioning—so content with their little round of duties—they seem so willing to live hemmed in by their narrow horizon, without a

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'*beyond.*' Think! To be born here, in the country, inland—so *terribly inland,*" smiling nervously, "with no outlook, no ambition, no ideals! To spend one's childhood learning housework, going to a village-school, reading a little with one's father, the village doctor, taking solitary walks with a blackberry-pail! Think of the sewing-circle and the church-fair!"

"Oh, do not think of it at all!" exclaimed her friend, suddenly. She was turning the ring on her left hand over and over, with a pained flush on her cheeks.

"She went 'to town' once, when she was a girl," pursued Ruth, absently.

"Once! She went to visit my grandmother, who was her sister, you know, and much older than she. 'Town' must have seemed wonderful to her."

"Was she pretty when she was younger?" asked Mildred, hesitatingly.

"No-o," answered her friend—"no. They say that she was never pretty. She was a peculiar girl; her gray hair softens her face a little now—but *then* she was plain, very plain. Ah, this is not entertaining you," she added. "Poor Aunt Redheath! She would feel so disappointed if she thought that we would not be repaid for leaving town to pay her this little visit."

"It was good of her to ask me," said Mildred. "Cheer up! Any kind of an attic is better than none; and we have not yet rummaged this desk. Who knows what we may find in it? By the way—will she object?"

"Aunt? Oh, no! She gave me permission to read, taste or try on anything I pleased."

"More almanacs! Ah, me—and not a letter yet! What is this? 'Annual Report of First Congregational ——.' Oh, yes."

"It is strange that there are so few books here," remarked Mildred, disappointedly.

"All her books are downstairs. She loves them," said Ruth. "Perhaps they have contributed towards her content. We send her a few new ones every year, and it is astonishing what selections she makes."

"Astonishing?"

Ruth blushed. "You know what I mean," she said, vaguely.

"Here is an old catechism and some sealing-wax, ah!—and some letters of yours," announced Mildred.

"*Here* is a key!" laughed Ruth.

"A key! What a possibility! Bluebeard, perhaps. Now, what may it fit?" She stepped back to survey the uncompromising front of the big desk; she opened one drawer and then another, pausing at last to exclaim with some disappointment:



"Oh, they are all alike. There is no secret spring anywhere, my deluded child! But have you tried that little drawer at the top?"

"No, it is locked," said Mildred.

"Locked? All the better. A locked drawer? Good! I'll just—try the key—here, . . . and——"

"Ah! What did I tell you?"

"Nothing important, that I am aware of. But, surely, *this* will prove interesting."

"Letters?"

"No—o. It's a story, or a journal. Yet I see no date. What cramped handwriting!"

"Delightful! It looks old, too, quite old. It does not seem to be long. Come!"

With some pleasurable excitement the two girls sat down on a horse-hair sofa near by and read together:

DECEMBER 10TH, —.

It is snowing.

The rumble of wheels in the streets is muffled. The shouts of the little boys at play come to my ears dimly. This snow

dulls my thoughts. It makes the world outside look vacant, too. But why should I complain of it? In the country it must make life seem all the more blank and desolate. I am thankful that I do not live there. If I were in Maine, instead of Boston, now, I might work about the house, perhaps, sew, read, dust, until a path was shovelled to the outer world again. What a wilderness it must be!

Here it is different. We are going to a concert this evening. The great violinist, Vladimir Claudius, is to play——

“What a stilted little sentence!” laughed Mildred. “It seems to be a journal, however. And Vladimir Claudius! See, the year is not given; but this must have been written when he was a young man.”

The great violinist, Vladimir Claudius, is to play. I have never heard him. They say that he is very wonderful.

I saw a picture of him yesterday. According to the likeness, he has a fine face, with brilliant eyes and a high, full brow.

He had great success in England, they say, where the young Queen and the Prince Consort were much interested in him.

But why should I waste these moments writing what any one may read in the daily papers? It is an idle pastime. Besides this, my sister calls me, for the third time. I must go to her.

#### DECEMBER 11TH.

We heard Vladimir Claudius play yesterday evening.

The hall was crowded, in spite of the storm, with a brilliant and enthusiastic audience.

Used as I am to such scenes, I could not but feel a certain excitement, increased possibly by the heat and light; for there is always something stimulating about such surroundings. The concert was long and pleasing. One young lady, a new favorite, whose name I have forgotten, sang one of Mr. Thomas Moore's songs and was much applauded. A second singer, who gave “*I would that my love could silently flow,*” was not received with marked attention. But at last, Mr. Claudius came upon the stage, violin in hand and bowed to the audience. As the poet Campbell says, “There was silence deep as death.”

Then he lifted the instrument to his shoulder, quietly, as the player who accompanied him took his seat, and then he drew the bow across the strings.

I will not attempt to describe how he played. I hardly know

what he played. The name of the piece on the programme is meaningless beside the memory of the music itself.

Mildred paused here and shook her head.

"I wonder who wrote this," she said.

"I do not know the handwriting," replied Ruth. "But it must have been written a long time ago. Vladimir Claudius is old now. And besides—how old-fashioned it all sounds! Who knows? Perhaps we have unravelled a mystery. Come, let me read it." And taking the yellow leaves in her young hands, she read aloud hurriedly :

To the delight of the audience, he responded quite graciously after their enthusiastic applause.

The perfection of his music was always equal—the great certainty and fire with which he executed the most difficult passages, and the piercing sweetness of the melody.

He looks much older than he is, I believe, as the thoughtfulness of his brow adds to his apparent age. He has dark, waving hair, and clear, bright eyes of a strange blue color. When he plays these eyes seem, if I may use such an expression, *sightless*: he does not seem to "see beyond," as they say of many great musicians. But there is a kind of divine vacancy in them (I say it without profanity), and to me he looked as if he were gazing at the sun, his eyes opened widely, but blinded with light.

My sister touched my arm when he ceased playing for the second time, and asked me what the music was, for she had lost her programme.

I was much embarrassed to be caught thus dreaming, and, without stopping to reflect that I had not noticed the name myself, I answered, hastily glancing at the paper, "'The Harp that Once Thro' Tara's Halls,' sung by Miss Douglas." Of course, there was some laughter at my expense.

JANUARY 10.

We went to the Randolph's house yesterday evening to meet Mr. Claudius, whose acquaintance our friends made when they were in Europe last year.

My sister and I decided to wear white, and I was most glad, as it becomes me more than anything else.

So I put on a fine white organdy, with a bertha of my mother's thread-lace, and wore an ivory comb in my hair. I have never been considered a prey to vanity, which is a fault that I detest

and struggle against; but, although I tried to think nothing about it, as I stood before the mirror I decided that I certainly did not look ill.

My conscience repeatedly murmured, "Why should you exult because you have a few physical charms? These are worth little and, indeed, you will never be famous for such as you have. But I did not listen. They say that I am sometimes pert, and I tossed my head then and went on saying to myself—but it is sinful, also, to tell a lie! My hair is long and thick and such a bright brown! I like the little rings that mother calls untidy. Why are they untidy? The leaves do not grow straight and stiff always. I am glad that my eyes are such a clear gray—and that my lashes are long. I have more than a few beauties, let me say it; for my throat is long and white, yes, and I have a very tolerable mouth."

With such thoughts in my mind I went to the Randolph's house.

Mr. Claudius was presented to all the guests as they arrived, and it seemed most strange to be speaking to a man whom I had seen at a distance—the centre of all eyes—ministering to all ears.

Later, when he played, I sat near him and he glanced at me, I thought, when he took up the violin. There was a red rose in the bosom of my gown, and Mr. Claudius looked at that again when he was playing. There was not that look of splendid blindness upon his face that evening. Instead, he seemed conscious of all that was about him—indeed, of the effect his music had upon us.

When he laid down his bow there was a burst of delight after the moment's silence. Every one hastened to thank him, myself excepted.

It was strange. I sat nearest him, and yet some perverse feeling closed my lips. I sat looking down at the rose, when he leaned towards me and said in French, "So you will not thank me . . . ? You think I am already a spoiled child?"

"No," I answered, "but have you not thanks enough already?" Something compelled me to raise my eyes then, and they were moist.

"You are right," said Mr. Claudius, looking away for a second. Then he turned back, and, smiling a little, he asked me if I would give him the rose or no.

I have since thought that I must have forgotten what I had been saying, else I should not have seemed so whimsical and



vacillating. (I will read Watt's "On the Mind" to-day. My father has often urged me to do so.)

For I gave him the rose.

JANUARY 15TH.

I have met Mr. Claudius again.

He has been visiting the Randolph's during his stay here, it seems, and to-day, after I had lunched with Lucy, the eldest daughter, he entered the drawing-room. "Are you looking for my father, Mr. Claudius?" asked Lucy. "Wait! He is in the library, I think. But Naomi will talk to you while I find him."

"*Naomi!*" repeated Mildred. "Here is some clue. It must have been a relation of your aunt's—her namesake, perhaps." They read on eagerly.

"So I see you again," said Mr. Claudius. This seemed to me an unnecessary remark, since he was looking at me while he spoke.

I answered that unless he was very near-sighted, that was true, and then felt ashamed of my giddy tongue.

I begged him to excuse it and confessed that my mother had often called me something of a shrew.

He seemed amused and repeated the word several times with a foreign accent that made it interesting. For I have observed that although it is most unpleasant to hear an American pronounce a word so incorrectly, there is something about a foreigner's conversation that makes this no longer an offense, but almost attractive.

Mr. Claudius soon asked me if I would sing for him. I answered that I never sang for any one. "Oh, but you do sing," he said. He was so assured in his manner, and I was so vexed, that I dared not sing for him, that I forgot the saying, "Pride goeth before a fall," and said quite disagreeably, "If I have never sung for anyone else, how can I sing for you?"

He was most good-natured and only said, laughing, that he would see.

FEBRUARY.

I have a new song.

It was sent to me only yesterday, written fairly, not printed, and dedicated to myself. I was more pleased than I can say, and I hastened to try the melody, which I thought very beautiful, and learn the words—about a red rose.

As there was no one else at home, excepting the servants, in the afternoon, I had a fitting opportunity to sing.

I am always happy singing alone. I like to hear the sound flow from my throat; I like to listen to a long clear note, and think, "I made that; it was my own voice."

So I was singing my new song loudly, clearly, in my chamber, when I thought, "I will try it again, with the piano," and away I ran, hurrying down-stairs and singing all the while, at the top of my lungs, without noticing that the bell had rung and that some one had been admitted.

I had, therefore, come to the end of my song, and the end of the staircase too, when he, stepping out of the dusky hall, took my hand, saying, "Ah, and so you do not sing at all!" I was so much startled that I could not answer immediately, and Mr. Claudius laughed again and went on asking me if I liked his song, adding that he was sure I did.

"Why?" I asked, rather astonished by his boldness.

"Because you sang it so well," he answered.

"Do you like my voice?" I asked, audaciously following his example.

"Yes," said Mr. Claudius. Then he gravely assisted me down the last step and we went into the parlor.

He has earnestly advised me to go to Europe and study music. He has even proposed to give me letters to some friends of his in Germany.

He talked to me of his country and his art until I seemed to be looking into a new world. Life suddenly grew so! There were such wonderful things in it—such great people! And I might be great, too. People might some day grow pale and red in turn, to hear me sing!

It may have been frivolous, but I felt so joyful at this.

I rose from my chair and stood looking at Mr. Claudius. I told him that I was twenty years old and very stupid. I asked him if he thought I could really learn to sing. I began another sentence yet, "Do you think——" and here I paused, and recollecting myself, said no more.

"Yes," answered Mr. Claudius.

#### MARCH.

It has actually come true.

After long thought and many objections my parents have decided to send me to Germany. I am to study singing! I am to enter a New World.

I shall cross the Sea: I shall visit countries of which I have

dreamed: I may even be famous, *great*, some day! Surely for this it is not strange that I should be grateful; it is not strange that I should dream.

What if I had never gone to that concert? I might never have learned to sing; I might never have had my song—the song about the red rose. I might never have gone to Germany.

What if I had only *heard* of the world which others enjoy? What if I had been made ugly, with dim eyes and unshapely features?

I think of strange things to-day. But the earth seems new.  
I am alive,—I can sing. I am going to cross the Sea!

#### APRIL.

It all seems like a strange dream which I can never forget. The big room, seemingly full of men, tho' there were only a few students there, and the professor before whom I was to sing, a middle-aged German, with sharp eyes and an abrupt manner.

The friend of Mr. Claudius introduced me, and the German commanded me to sing. Accordingly, I threw back my mantle and expectantly glanced at the other pupils, while my companion seated himself at the piano, to accompany me.

The others did not seem inclined to leave the room, and when I hesitated and looked at the Professor, he nodded his head and cried, "Begin!"

I began. How I sang I do not know, my embarrassment at the unexpected audience had turned into anger and helped me to keep my self-possession. Then, too, quite strangely, I happened to think of that day when I ran down-stairs singing my rose-song.

When I had finished, the Professor, taking no notice of me, turned to the students who were still staring at my American face and garments.

"What do you say? Shall we take her?" he asked in German. They all shouted "Ya!"

#### OCTOBER.

Oh, these busy days! Every hour is full of work,—*glorious* work.

My friends say that my voice has grown wonderfully; they say that my voice *itself* is wonderful. How can I ever be thankful enough for what I possess?

My little talent, which I hid in a napkin—foolishly, jealously,

—has become ten, it seems to me. In the Scriptures this was not so. How blessed I am!

Besides this work of mine, I have such happiness in remembering that long sea-voyage, and the new thoughts it gave me.



I have the new sights, new sounds, new people, all around me. More than that,—yes, more than that, too!

I used to believe that it was very easy for such happy people to be good; but it is hard—harder than I supposed. I am so vain.

The other day, as I stood singing and listening, I was so happy that I suddenly ap-

proached the mirror and kissed my own face there, with a sudden feeling of friendliness.

#### MARCH.

The friend of Mr. Claudius came to see me, yesterday, again.

He, too, is a musician—a great one—and I was anxious to please him.

So I sang the Rose-Song for him—sang it as I have never dreamed that I could sing.

He was so astonished at my improvement that I could only laugh with delight.

“Who wrote that?” he asked.

I told him.

“You are fortunate,” he said.

Later, he told me that his friend was expected home soon.

“Here?” I asked

“Yes,” said he.

#### AUGUST.

It was a very warm day, and I was standing on the steps of the house where I board, singing softly to myself.

The sun beat upon my head, hot and golden, but I love to feel it, like a warm hand on my hair. So I stood there, singing and idly watching a fair-haired German child playing in the highway.

I was thinking of all that happened since the previous August, and at last I bent my head and dreamed a moment with shut eyes in the sunlight, and stopped singing.

There was a curve in the road near our house, and I was

vaguely aware of the sound of a horse's hoofs in the distance, coming nearer always.

Still I stood, smiling to myself, with my eyes closed, until some instinct forced me to look up.

There was a closed carriage coming down the road at great speed; the driver—was he stupid or blind?

There, *so near*, the little child playing in the dust!

Before I had realized all that was threatened, I sprang down the steps, through the gateway, into the road, and flung myself against the horse, seizing the bridle with all my strength.

I was dragged heavily forward; something stopped with a jar.

The child was safe.

A strange sensation of blindness and dumbness came over me. Some one had sprung from the carriage. Then, as I turned my eyes vacantly, I was lifted, lifted high in strong arms. . . .

When I opened my eyes again I was in the little parlor.

"Your good landlady has gone for a doctor," said Mr. Claudius to me. "But tell me, child, you are not much hurt?"

"No, I was only frightened," I answered. "Bruised a little, perhaps—and my arm——"

Mr. Claudius took my hands with a sudden exclamation.

"You are *hurt!*" said he. "What, a sprain? . . . And see, your pretty hair is coming unfastened."

We did not wait long for the doctor; he came quite soon.

#### SEPTEMBER.

I wish that my arm had not healed so quickly.

It is quite well now, and never reminds me of the happy accident.

For though I suffered much, I used to lie and think of the dear little child in the road and thank heaven for the happiness of saving her.

Happiness? Everything is happiness now; and what if I forget the old days, the old world?

There was a concert this week. Mr. Claudius was there; the people were mad with enthusiasm over him.

But this is not all. I sang, too. I *sang*. Shall I ever forget it? The strange new feeling of being applauded, being loved because you can sing, and because they think you are beautiful. That was not all. How shall I say it? At sunset, yesterday, I wandered away, through the garden. It was cool, but I had

forgotten that, with my eyes fixed on the warmth of the sunset, and that Rose-Song in my ears.

I had a red rose in my hand, then, to think of, while I listened, to whisper to, sometimes ; for a rose is a friend.

But when *he* came down the walk, I thought no more of the



rose, until he said, drawing something from his pocket, "Naomi, here is another rose. Tell me—are they of the same color?"

"No," I answered. "Yours is far too old and dried," and I looked up. He asked me then why there were tears in my eyes. And I told him.

The two girls looked at each other.

"How strange!" said Ruth. "And *Vladimir Claudius!*

Have you ever seen the song? Have you ever heard of it?"

"I do not remember," said Mildred, hurriedly. "What a queer girl! rather an egoist, but who could blame her? Come, let us find Aunt. She must know what it is and who wrote it. *Vladimir Claudius*! Think! Whom did he marry? I suppose girls lost their heads over him, long ago. I heard him play, this winter; he is old, now. They say that he does not play so very well, really. Come!"

And catching up the few sheets of paper, Ruth seized her friend's hand and hastened with her down-stairs, into the low-studded room where Miss Redheath was sitting.

"Aunt, Aunt!" cried the girl. "See what we found in the garret! Part of a journal; the queerest old-fashioned account. It is all about Claudius, and the girl was named Naomi, like you! Who wrote it? Tell us——"

She paused here, for Miss Redheath rose, suddenly, with a little cry, and held out her hand as if to snatch the papers. A dull flush sprang into her cheeks; two tears rose into her eyes. Then, pushing away their outstretched arms, she left the room.

For a moment the girls stood blankly amazed, then the younger whispered, "What *can* it be? Aunt——, I never saw her so before. Oh, I am so sorry! What have I done?"

"Let us take the journal back," said the other.

"I do not understand, I do not understand!" Ruth was saying helplessly, as they replaced the written leaves in the drawer of the old desk.

A slip of paper fell into her lap, a small leaf that had evidently been thrust among the pages, but was no part of them. Smoothing it out with nervous fingers, she saw the words:

"What harm was there in writing it? It is only the story of a Naomi who might have lived, but never did. How can I say this? Yet, it is not true—*it is not true*. It was so easy to make her happy there. *I* was never beautiful, never beloved. I never saved a life. I never crossed the sea."

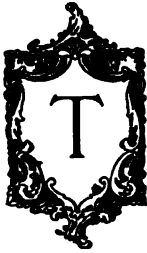
The girl looked up, her face full of tears.

"I do not understand," she repeated, in pained bewilderment.

"Who was Naomi?"

## THE ARGONAUTS \*

BY KENNETH GRAHAME



HE advent of strangers, of whatever sort, into our circle, had always been a matter of grave dubiety and suspicion; indeed, it was generally a signal for retreat into caves and fastnesses of the earth, into unthreaded copses or remote outlying cowsheds, whence we were only to be extricated by wily nursemaids, rendered familiar by experience with our secret runs and refuges. It was not surprising, therefore, that the heroes of classic legend, when first we made their acquaintance, failed to win our entire sympathy at once. "Confidence," says somebody, "is a plant of slow growth;" and these stately, dark-haired demi-gods, with names hard to master and strange accoutrements, had to win a citadel already strongly garrisoned with a more familiar soldiery. Their chill foreign goddesses had no such direct appeal for us as the mocking, malicious fairies and witches of the north; we missed the pleasant alliance of the animal—the fox who spread the bushiest of tails to convey us to the enchanted castle, the frog in the well, the raven who croaked advice from the tree; and—to Harold especially—it seemed entirely wrong that the hero should ever be other than the younger brother of three. This belief, indeed, in the special fortune that ever awaited the youngest brother, as such—the "Borough-English" of Faery—had been of baleful effect on Harold, producing a certain self-conceit and perkiness that called for physical correction. But even in our admonishment we were on his side; and as we distrustfully eyed these new arrivals, old Saturn himself seemed something of a *parvenu*.

Even strangers, however, if they be good fellows at heart, may develop into sworn comrades; and these gay swordsmen, after all, were of the right stuff. Perseus, with his cap of darkness and his wonderful sandals, was not long in winging his way to our hearts; Apollo knocked at Admetus' gate in something of the right fairy fashion; Psyche brought with her an orthodox

\* A Selection from "The National Observer."



palace of magic, as well as helpful birds and friendly ants. Ulysses, with his captivating shifts and strategies, broke down the final barrier, and henceforth the band was adopted and admitted into our freemasonry.

I had been engaged in chasing Farmer Larkin's calves—his special pride—round the field, just to show the man we hadn't forgotten him, and was returning through the kitchen-garden with a conscience at peace with all men, when I happened upon Edward, grubbing for worms in the dung-heap. Edward put his worms into his hat, and we strolled along together, discussing high matters of state. As we reached the tool-shed, strange noises arrested our steps; looking in, we perceived Harold, alone, rapt, absorbed, immersed in the special game of the moment. He was squatting in an old pig-trough that had been brought in to be tinkered; and as he rhapsodised, anon he waved a shovel over his head, anon dug it into the ground with the action of those who would urge Canadian canoes. Edward strode in upon him.

"What rot are you playing at now?" he demanded sternly.

Harold flushed up, but stuck to his pig-trough like a man. "I'm Jason," he replied defiantly; "and this is the Argo. The other fellows are here too, only you can't see them; and we're just going through the Hellespont, so don't you come bothering." And once more he plied the wine-dark sea.

Edward kicked the pig-trough contemptuously. "Pretty sort of Argo you've got!" said he.

Harold began to get annoyed. "I can't help it," he replied. "It's the best sort of Argo I can manage, and it's all right, if you only pretend enough; but you never could pretend one bit."

Edward reflected. "Look here," he said presently. "Why shouldn't we get hold of Farmer Larkin's boat, and bang away up the river in a real Argo, and look for Medea, and the Golden Fleece, and everything? And I'll tell you what, I don't mind your being Jason, as you thought of it first."

Harold tumbled out of the trough in the excess of his emotion. "But we aren't allowed to go on the water by ourselves," he cried.

"No," said Edward, with fine scorn; "we aren't allowed; and Jason wasn't allowed either, I dare say—but he *went!*"

Harold's protest had been merely conventional; he only wanted to be convinced by sound argument. The next question was, How about the girls? Selina was distinctly handy in a boat;

the difficulty about her was, that if she disapproved of the expedition—and, morally considered, it was not exactly a Pilgrim's Progress—she might go and tell; for she had just reached that disagreeable age when one begins to develop a conscience. Charlotte, for her part, had a habit of day-dreams, and was as likely as not to fall overboard in one of her rapt musings. To be sure, she would dissolve in tears when she found herself left out; but even that was better than a watery tomb. In fine, the public voice—and rightly, perhaps—was against the admission of the skirted animal, spite the precedent of Atalanta, who was one of the original crew.

"And now," said Edward, "who's to ask Farmer Larkin? I can't; last time I saw him he said when he caught me again he'd smack my head. *You'll* have to."

I hesitated, for good reasons. "You know those precious calves of his?" I began.

Edward understood at once. "All right," he said; "then we won't ask him at all. It doesn't much matter. He'd only be annoyed, and that would be a pity. Now, let's set off."

We made our way down to the stream, and captured the farmer's boat without let or hindrance, the enemy being engaged in the hayfields. This "river," so-called, could never be discovered by us in any atlas; indeed, our Argo could hardly turn in it without risk of shipwreck. But to us 'twas Orinoco, and the cities of the world dotted its shores. We put the Argo's head up-stream, since that led away from the Larkin province; Harold was faithfully permitted to be Jason, and we shared the rest of the heroes among us. So we passed, rejoicing, over the deep-blue Symplegades, through the Clashing Rocks, and under the lee of the siren-haunted isles.

It was after some hour or two's seafaring that the prow of the Argo embedded itself in the mud of a landing-place, plashy with the tread of cows and giving on to a lane that led towards the smoke of human habitations. Edward jumped ashore, alert for exploration, and strode off without waiting to see if we followed; but I lingered behind, having caught sight of a moss-grown water-gate hard by, leading into a garden that, from the brooding quiet lapping it round, appeared to portend magical possibilities. Indeed, the very air within seemed stiller, as we circumspectly passed through the gate; and Harold hung back shamefaced, as if we were crossing the threshold of some private chamber, and ghosts of old days were hustling past us.

Flowers there were, everywhere; but they drooped and sprawled in an overgrowth hinting at indifference; the scent of heliotrope possessed the place as if actually hung in solid festoons from tall untrimmed hedge to hedge. No basket-chairs, shawls, or novels dotted the lawn with color; and on the garden-front of the house behind, the blinds were mostly drawn. A gray old sun-dial dominated the central sward, and we moved towards it instinctively, as the most human thing visible. An antique motto ran round it, and with eyes and fingers we struggled at the decipherment.

"TIME : TRYETH : TROTHE : " spelt out Harold at last. "I wonder what that means?"

I could not enlighten him, nor meet his further questions as to the inner mechanism of the thing, and where you wound it up. I had seen these instruments before, of course; but had never fully understood their manner of working.

We were still puzzling our heads over the contrivance, when I became aware that Medea herself was moving down the path from the house. Dark-haired, supple, of a figure lightly posed and swayed, but pale and listless—I knew her at once, and having come out to find her, naturally felt no surprise at all. But Harold, who was trying to climb on to the top of the sun-dial, having a cat-like fondness for the summit of things, started and fell prone, barking his chin and filling the pleasance with lamentation.

Medea skimmed the ground swallow-like, and in a moment was on her knees comforting him, wiping the gravel out of his chin with her own dainty handkerchief, and vocal with soft murmurs of consolation.

"You needn't take on so about him," I observed politely. "He'll cry for just one minute, and then he'll be all right."

My estimate was justified. At the end of his regulation time Harold stopped crying suddenly, like a clock that had struck its hour; and with a serene and cheerful countenance, wriggled out of Medea's embrace, and ran for a stone to throw at an intrusive blackbird.

"O you boys!" cried Medea, throwing wide her arms with abandonment. "Where have you dropped from? How dirty you are! I've been shut up here for a thousand years, and all that time I've never seen any one under a hundred and fifty! Let's play at something, at once!"

"Rounders is a good game," I suggested. "Girls can play

at rounders. And we could serve up to the sun-dial here. But you want a bat and a ball, and some more people."

She struck her hands together tragically. "I haven't a bat," she cried, "or a ball, or more people, or anything sensible whatever. Never mind; let's play at hide-and-seek in the kitchen-garden. And we'll race there, up to that walnut-tree; I haven't run for a century!"

She was so easy a victor, nevertheless, that I began to doubt, as I panted behind, whether she had not exaggerated her age by a year or two. She flung herself into hide-and-seek with all the gusto and abandonment of the true artist; and as she flitted away and re-appeared, flushed and laughing divinely, the pale witch-maiden seemed to fall away from her, and she moved rather as that other girl I had read about, snatched from fields of daffodil to reign in shadow below, yet permitted once again to visit earth and light and the frank, caressing air.

Tired at last, we strolled back to the old sun-dial, and Harold, who never relinquished a problem unsolved, began afresh, rubbing his finger along the faint incisions, "*Time trieth trothe*. Please, I want to know what that means?"

Medea's face drooped low over the sun-dial, till it was almost hidden in her fingers. "That's what I'm here for," she said presently in quite a changed, low voice. "They shut me up here—they think I'll forget—but I never will—never, never! And he, too—but I don't know—it is so long—I don't know!"

Her face was quite hidden now. There was silence again in the old garden. I felt clumsily helpless and awkward. Nothing remedial suggested itself beyond a vague idea of kicking Harold.

None of us had noticed the approach of another she-creature—one of the angular and rigid class—how different from our dear comrade! The years Medea had claimed might well have belonged to her; she wore mittens, too—a trick I detested in woman. "Lucy!" she said sharply, in a tone with *aunt* writ large all over it; and Medea started up guiltily.

"You've been crying," said the newcomer, grimly regarding her through spectacles. "And pray who are these exceedingly dirty little boys?"

"Friends of mine, aunt," said Medea promptly, with forced cheerfulness. "I—I've known them a long time. I asked them to come."

The aunt sniffed suspiciously. "You must come indoors,

dear," she said, "and lie down. The sun will give you a headache. And you little boys had better run away home to your tea. Remember, you should not come to pay visits without your nursemaid."

Harold had been tugging nervously at my jacket for some time, and I only waited till Medea turned and kissed a white hand to us as she was led away. Then I ran. We gained the boat in safety; and "What an old dragon!" said Harold.

"Wasn't she a beast!" I replied. "Fancy the sun giving any one a headache! But Medea was a real brick. Couldn't we carry her off?"

"We could if Edward was here," said Harold, confidently.

The question was, what had become of that defaulting hero? We were not left long in doubt. First, there came down the lane the shrill and wrathful clamor of a female tongue; then Edward, running his best; and then an excited woman hard on his heels. Edward tumbled into the bottom of the boat, gasping "Shove her off!" And shove her off we did, mightily, while the dame abused us from the bank in the self-same accents with which Alfred hurled defiance at the marauding Dane.

"That was just like a bit out of Westward Ho!" I remarked approvingly, as we sculled down the stream. "But what had you been doing to her?"

"Hadn't been doing anything," panted Edward, still breathless. "I went up into the village and explored, and it was a very nice one, and the people were very polite. And there was a blacksmith's forge there, and they were shoeing horses, and the hoofs fizzled and smoked, and smelt so jolly! I stayed there quite a long time. Then I got thirsty, so I asked that old woman for some water, and while she was getting it her cat came out of the cottage, and looked at me in a nasty sort of way, and said something I didn't like. So I went up to it just to—to teach it manners, and somehow or other, next minute it was up an apple-tree, spitting, and I was running down the lane with that old thing after me."

Edward was so full of his personal injuries that there was no interesting him in Medea at all. Moreover, the evening was closing in, and it was evident that this cutting-out expedition must be kept for another day. As we neared home, it gradually occurred to us that perhaps the greatest danger was yet to come; for the farmer must have missed his boat ere now, and would probably be lying in wait for us near the landing-place. There was

no other spot admitting of debarcation on the home side; if we got out on the other, and made for the bridge, we should certainly be seen and cut off. Then it was that I blessed my stars that our elder brother was with us that day; he might be little good at pretending, but in grappling with the stern facts of life he had no equal. Enjoining silence, he waited till we were but a little way from the fated landing-place, and then brought us in to the opposite bank. We scrambled out noiselessly and—the gathering darkness favoring us—crouched behind a willow, while Edward pushed off the empty boat with his foot. The old Argo, borne down by the gentle current, slid and grazed along the rushy bank; and when she came opposite the suspected ambush, a stream of imprecation told us that our precaution had not been wasted. We wondered, as we listened, where Farmer Larkin, who was bucolically bred and reared, had acquired such range and wealth of vocabulary. Fully realizing at last that his boat was derelict, abandoned, at the mercy of wind and wave—as well as out of his reach—he strode away to the bridge, about a quarter of a mile further down; and as soon as we heard his boots clumping on the planks we nipped out, recovered the craft, pulled across, and made the faithful vessel fast to her proper moorings. Edward was anxious to wait and exchange courtesies and compliments with the disappointed farmer, when he should confront us on the opposite bank; but wiser counsels prevailed. It was possible that the piracy was not yet laid at our particular door. Ulysses, I reminded him, had reason to regret a similar act of bravado, and—were he here—would certainly advise a timely retreat. Edward held but a low opinion of me as a counsellor, but he had a very solid respect for Ulysses.



## THE SMUGGLER\*

BY MAURICE MONTÉGUT

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ON the frontier, opposite Spain, like a dog couchant between two pillars, lies Querterac guarding the entrance to a valley. On the right and left the mountains, broken for a space, resume their monotonous, unending chain. Querterac is a small old-fashioned town that was once fortified. It is difficult of access, and has about six thousand inhabitants.

On the neighboring mountains, regarded as neutral, has gathered a population as doubtful in morality as in nationality; a confused mixture of Gascons, Basques and Catalonians, whose chief occupations are highway robbery and smuggling.

About the middle of the present century cholera was devastating Spain, Italy and France.

In the country and in the towns there was a cessation from the activities of life. The inhabitants barricaded themselves in vain against the invisible enemy, which glided treacherously through half-opened doors, locks and unsuspected openings in roofs and walls. In Querterac, a victim from the first day, nothing could be seen but deserted streets and houses closed from top to bottom. Those who fell in the public squares had no assistance, for pity was dead through fear. The civil authorities were disobeyed and despised as useless and powerless, no regard being paid to the official notices that were placarded on the doors and walls. A few citizens at evening, when the wind blew from the mountains, lighted enormous piles of disinfectants, the dancing flames of which tinged with rose colors the gloomy façades of the buildings, and the smoke spread over the town, filling it with a delicious odor of resin and tar. It was at this hour that grave-diggers, hired with great difficulty at enormous prices, took away those who had died during the day, throwing them hastily into coffins, and these mournful processions, filing through the streets at a lively trot towards the cemetery in a

\* Translated from the French, by N. Rowe, for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

remote corner north of Querterac, increased the panic. The dead were carried out alone and unattended, while their relatives sniffed perfumes and sprinkled the entrances to their houses with strong vinegar and alcohol.

If fear was great, and selfishness hard in the city, the country was even more distracted and cruel. If a beggar showed himself at the door of some lonely farm-house, he was received with stones and bullets; the dogs were set on him and he was maltreated. Perfectly absurd stories were circulated among the country people. They said that cholera was not so bad as it was reported to be. Many people who had seemingly died of cholera had really been poisoned by some enemy, who had drugged the water or kneaded arsenic into the bread.

In short, the people in the valley were eternally in dread of some hostile action on the part of "those rascals up above," as they called the mixed race that dwelt in the caves and recesses of the mountains.

The opportunity was a good one for these mountaineers to plunder the flocks and property of those below, but "those rascals up above" never stirred from their holes. Why?

Well, they also were dying. They seemed to die in more astonishing proportions than elsewhere, and one never could have believed that there were so many people in those mountains.

At Querterac there was considerable astonishment, for after a few days the epidemic began to decrease, but the mountaineers insisted on dying. The townspeople did not understand it, but they could not help admiring the piety of those people above. Every evening three or four jolting vehicles, loaded with coffins and followed by men and women in mourning, descended slowly through the ravine, entered the village and passed silently towards the cemetery. The shadows of the mournful cortège, in the light of the glowing fires, cast dark, fantastic pictures on the walls. The passers-by fled at the sight, seized with fresh alarm. It was over a lonely route that the procession passed to reach the cemetery, and those poor wretches, those heathen followed their dead to their last resting-place, when it would have been so easy to throw the bodies into the ravines and rivers, or to leave them to the wolves and eagles; but no, those wanderers, those aliens scrupulously regarded the rites of burial.

The charge of the Custom House, at Querterac, is one of



great importance and generally falls to a competent officer. From this point inspectors, going to and fro, carefully watch the narrow valley which is the only easy entrance from Spain. During the epidemic death interrupted the routine of duty, for on some days twenty men fell victims to the disease and the survivors, distracted by the panic, neglected their work.

One man only kept his post, the old man Valgenod; he always sounded the final d. He was a born custom-house officer; he belonged to that race; he could smell a smuggler three hours before he saw him, and six miles off a bale of tobacco would make him sneeze. Night and day he kept on his rounds, declaring that it would be an absurdity for an old customs-man to die of the colic, as he called the cholera. The guards were increased, and Valgenod went the rounds of those who did not answer to their names at roll-call. He was always watching the mountain, the lair of the monsters. He knew them every one—those smugglers on whom he had fired so often when he had found them prowling around the town on some dark night. "Ah," said Valgenod, "not one of them shaves; yes, one, perhaps. Those fellows go against my stomach."



There was one old man, Father Meritas, a gray-bearded gipsy, with whom Valgenod had frequently come into contact, and each had a high opinion of the cleverness of the other.

"Valgenod," said Meritas. "The scoundrel! If it were not for him! If he were only out of the way!"

"Meritas," said Valgenod. "The rogue! The day after my death he will smuggle Madrid into France."

Meritas was a smuggler, as Valgenod was a custom-house officer, from temperament and instinct. It was his vocation. Numerous were the tricks that he invented, the schemes that he devised, and he was never caught. In the caves of the mountains were hidden bales of tobacco, cloths, skins, Spanish laces and liquors. In some way or another all this merchandise was gradually smuggled into France, but how, no one, not even Valgenod, knew.

It was the third day of the epidemic, just about twilight, that Valgenod, scenting the winds and looking around, saw a cart,

drawn by a broken-winded mule, entering the valley and going straight towards the gates of the town. Behind came Meritas and a few ill-clad fellows of his tribe, who were singing psalms in a harsh patois. The cart was a railed one and, in spite of the approaching darkness, the sergeant made out the long shape of a coffin.

"Ah," he moaned. "There is suffering up there, too. Honest people are not the only ones to die, I see."

He drew himself up to let the procession pass, and gave the military salute—a corpse deserved such salute even though it was one of those reprobates. Before the walls of the custom-house, Meritas, whose eyes gleamed like two fires, in his pale face, raised his long, lean arms to heaven and sobbed—

"My wife! My wife! My wife!"

"Poor old man," said Valgenod, and he drew a match to light his pipe, for he felt an unusual tenderness creeping over him.

Two days later another procession was seen winding around the mountain, and Meritas was walking behind. This time there were three coffins in the cart.

"Well, now," thought Valgenod, "these cannot all be his. Perhaps it is a subscription."

But the old smuggler was tearing his beard and shrieking in broken tones at the top of his voice—

"My sons! my sons! who can give me back my sons?"

The sergeant saluted three times, and the entire post, drawn out in line along the open gratings, uncovered piously before the bitter grief of the distracted father.

Every evening, at the setting of the sun, a funeral procession passed through the town and Meritas invariably formed part of the cortège. He walked with a friend on each side supporting him, calling aloud on God, blessing the dead and lamenting his fate. He buried in order his wife, his sons, his daughters, his nephews, his cousins. One day he besought Valgenod to kill him and end his suffering.

"He is getting silly, and there is some reason for it," said the sergeant, shrugging his shoulders.

Finally, so strong is pity, he felt his former respect grow into love for his old enemy.

These funerals continued for three weeks. Then the people in the town began to wonder. Querterac awoke from its stupor, the epidemic seemed to have disappeared; the deaths became

fewer and fewer; the windows were opened; every one would have regained confidence if it had not been for those mournful processions that came down every evening from above, a lamentable proof that the epidemic was still raging, if not in the city, at any rate in the outposts.

One evening, it was the last, three carts, as usual, were crossing the city bridge. One of them, the foremost, struck against a milestone; the mule backed and the cart upset, throwing its contents, two coffins, at the feet of Valgenod. In the fall the lid of one of the coffins fell off. Immediately Meritas and all the mourners, spreading out their arms like the wings of birds, fled to the mountains. Valgenod was astonished to see, instead of the corpse, before which he was already preparing to flee, rolling between his legs four bales of merchandise, carefully marked.

"To arms," he cried.

The post ran up, but it was too late. The smugglers had escaped. The other carts were seized, and the coffins opened. They were all filled with merchandise. Valgenod tore his hair.

This then was the key to the mystery, the explanation of those numerous deaths, of those pious burials. Not one of those "rascals up above" had died from cholera. Meritas had not lost a wife or sons, daughters or cousins. All the coffins that had entered Querterac and had been saluted by the custom-house officers, had been loaded with lace, liquors and tobacco. They had been taken through the deserted streets and the contents stored in a house at the gates of the cemetery. When the house was searched it was empty. The merchandise had been sent away every day to the large towns.

The villagers smiled. Valgenod swore that in future he would refuse to pass a skeleton unless he turned his pockets inside out. Meritas disappeared.



BY BRET HARTE

THE good American bark "Skyscraper" was swinging at her moorings in the Clyde, off Bannock, ready for sea. But that good American bark—although owned in Baltimore—had not a plank of American timber in her hulk, nor a native American in her crew, and even her nautical "goodness" had been called into serious question by divers of that crew during her voyage, and answered more or less inconclusively with belaying-pins, marlin-spikes, and ropes' ends at the hands of an Irish-American captain and a Dutch and Danish mate. So much so, that the mysterious powers of the American Consul at St. Kentigern had been evoked to punish mutiny on the one hand, and battery and starvation on the other; both equally attested by manifestly false witness and subornation on each side. In the exercise of his functions the consul had opened and shut some jail doors, and otherwise effected the usual sullen and deceitful compromise, and his flag was now flying on a final visit, from the stern sheets of a smart boat alongside. It was with a feeling of relief at the end of the interview that he at last lifted his head above an atmosphere of perjury and bilge-water and came on deck. The sun and wind were ruffling and glinting on the broadening river beyond the "measured mile"; a few gulls were wavering and dipping near the lee-scuppers, and the sound of Sabbath bells, mellowed by a distance that secured immunity of conscience, came peacefully to his ear.

"Now that job's over, ye'll be takin' a partin' dhrink," suggested the captain.

The consul thought not. Certain incidents of "the job" were fresh in his memory, and he proposed to limit himself to his strict duty.

\* A selection from "Good Words."

"You have some passengers, I see," he said, pointing to a group of two men and a young girl, who had apparently just come aboard.

"Only wan; an engineer going out to Rio. Them's just his friends seein' him off, I'm thinkin'," returned the captain, surveying them somewhat contemptuously.

The consul was a little disturbed. He wondered if the passenger knew anything of the quality and reputation of the ship to which he was intrusting his fortunes. But he was only a *passenger*, and the consul's functions—like those of the aloft-sitting cherub of nautical song—were restricted exclusively to looking after "Poor Jack." However, he asked a few further questions, eliciting the fact that the stranger had already visited the ship with letters from the eminently respectable consignees at St. Kentigern, and contented himself with lingering near them. The young girl was accompanied by her father, a respectably rigid-looking, middle-class tradesman, who, however, seemed to be more interested in the novelty of his surroundings than in the movements of his daughter and their departing friend. So it chanced that the consul re-entered the cabin—ostensibly in search of a missing glove, but really with the intention of seeing how the passenger was bestowed—just behind them. But to his great embarrassment he at once perceived that, owing to the obscurity of the apartment, they had not noticed him, and before he could withdraw, the man had passed his arm around the young girl's half-stiffened, yet half-yielding figure.

"Only one, Ailsa," he pleaded in a slow, serious voice, pathetic from the very absence of any youthful passion in it; "just one now. It'll be gey lang before we meet again. Ye'll not refuse me now."

The young girl's lips seemed to murmur some protest, that however was lost in the beginning of a long and silent kiss.

The consul slipped out softly. His smile had died away. That unlooked-for touch of human weakness seemed to purify the stuffy and evil-reeking cabin, and the recollection of its brutal past to drop with a deck-load of iniquity behind him to the bottom of the Clyde. It is to be feared that in his unofficial moments he was inclined to be sentimental, and it seemed to him that the good ship Skyscraper henceforward carried an innocent freight not mentioned in her manifest, and that a gentle, ever-smiling figure, not entered on her books, had invisibly taken a place at her wheel.

But he was recalled to himself by a slight altercation on deck. The young girl and the passenger had just returned from the cabin. The consul, after a discreetly careless pause, had lifted his eyes to the young girl's face, and saw that it was singularly pretty in color and outline, but perfectly self-composed and serenely unconscious. And he was a little troubled to observe that the passenger was a middle-aged man, whose hard features were already considerably worn with trial and experience.

Both he and the girl were listening with sympathizing but cautious interest to her father's contention with the boatman who had brought them from shore, and who was now inclined to demand an extra fee for returning with them. The boatman alleged that he had been detained beyond "kirk time," and that this imperiling of his salvation could only be compensated by another shilling. To the consul's surprise, this extraordinary argument was recognized by the father, who, however, contented himself by simply contending that it had not been stipulated in the bargain. The issue was, therefore, limited, and the discussion progressed slowly and deliberately, with a certain calm dignity and argumentative satisfaction on both sides that exalted the subject, though it irritated the captain.

"If ye accept the premises that I've just laid down, that it's a contract"—began the boatman.

"Dry up! and haul off," said the captain.

"One moment," interposed the consul, with a rapid glance at the slight trouble in the young girl's face. Turning to the father, he went on: "Will you allow me to offer you and your daughter a seat in my boat?"

It was an unlooked-for and tempting proposal. The boatman was lazily lying on his oars, secure in self-righteousness and the conscious possession of the only available boat to shore; on the other hand, the smart gig of the consul, with its four oars, was not only a providential escape from a difficulty, but even to some extent a quasi-official indorsement of his contention. Yet he hesitated. "It'll be costin' ye no more?" he said interrogatively, glancing at the consul's boat crew, "or ye'll be askin' me a fair proportion."

"It will be the gentleman's own boat," said the girl, with a certain shy assurance, "and he'll be paying his boatmen by the day."

The consul hastened to explain that their passage would involve no additional expense to anybody, and added, tactfully, that he was glad to enable them to oppose extortion.

"Ay, but it's a preinciple," said the father, proudly, "and I'm pleased, sir, to see ye recognize it."

He proceeded to help his daughter into the boat without any further leave-taking of the passenger, to the consul's great surprise, and with only a parting nod from the young girl. It was as if this momentous incident were a sufficient reason for the absence of any further trivial sentiment.

Unfortunately the father chose to add an exordium for the benefit of the astonished boatman still lying on his oars.

"Let this be a lesson to ye, ma frien', when ye're ower sure! Ye'll ne'er say a herrin is dry until it be reestit an' reekit."

"Aye," said the boatman, with a lazy, significant glance at the consul, "it wull be a lesson to me not to trust to a lassie's *gangin'* jo, when thair's anither yin comin'."

"Give way," said the consul, sharply.

Yet his was the only irritated face in the boat as the men bent over their oars. The young girl and her father looked placidly at the receding ship, and waved their hands to the grave, resigned face over the taffrail. The consul examined them more attentively. The father's face showed intelligence and a certain probity in its otherwise commonplace features. The young girl had more distinction, with, perhaps, more delicacy of outline than of texture. Her hair was dark, with a burnished copper tint at its roots, and eyes that had the same burnished metallic lustre in their brown pupils. Both sat respectfully erect, as if anxious to record the fact that the boat was not their own to take their ease in; and both were silently reserved, answering briefly to the consul's remarks as if to indicate the formality of their presence there. But a distant railway whistle startled them into emotion.

"We've lost the train, father!" said the young girl.

The consul followed the direction of her anxious eyes; the train was just quitting the station at Bannock.

"If ye had not lingered below with Jamie, we'd have been away in time, aye, and in our own boat," said the father, with marked severity.

The consul glanced quickly at the girl. But her face betrayed no consciousness, except of their present disappointment.

"There's an excursion boat coming round the Point," he said, pointing to the black smoke trail of a steamer at the entrance of a loch, "and it will be returning to St. Kentigern shortly. If you like, we'll pull over and put you aboard."

"Eh! but it's the Sabbath-breaker!" said the old man, harshly.

The consul suddenly remembered that that was the name which the righteous St. Kentigerners had given to the solitary bold, bad pleasure-boat that defied their Sabbatical observances.

"Perhaps you won't find very pleasant company on board," said the consul, smiling; "but, then, your not seeking *that*. And as you would be only using the boat to get back to your home, and not for Sunday recreation, I don't think your conscience should trouble you."

"Aye, that's a fine argument, Mr. Consul, but I'm thinking it's none the less sopheestry for a' that," said the father, grimly. "No; if ye'll just land us yonder at Bannock pier, we'll be aye thankin' ye the same."

"But what will you do there? There's no other train to-day."

"Aye, we'll walk on a bit."

The consul was silent. After a pause the young girl lifted her clear eyes, and with a half pathetic, half childish politeness, said: "We'll be doing very well—my father and me. You're far too kind."

Nothing further was said as they began to thread their way between a few large ships and an ocean steamer at anchor, from whose decks a few Sunday-clothed mariners gazed down admiringly on the smart gig and the pretty girl in a Tam o'Shanter in its stern sheets. But here a new idea struck the consul. A cable's length ahead lay a yacht, owned by an American friend, and at her stern a steam launch swung to its painter. Without intimating his intention to his passengers he steered for it. "Bow!—way enough," he called out as the boat glided under the yacht's counter, and, grasping the companion-ladder ropes, he leaped aboard. In a few hurried words he explained the situation to Mr. Robert Gray, her owner, and suggested that he should send the belated passengers to St. Kentigern by the launch. Gray assented with the easy good-nature of youth, wealth and indolence, and lounged from his cabin to the side. The consul followed. Looking down upon the boat he could not help observing that his fair young passenger, sitting in her demure stillness at her father's side, made a very pretty picture. It was possible that "Bob Gray" had made the same observation, for he presently swung himself over the gangway into the gig, hat in hand. The launch could easily take them; in fact,



he added, unblushingly, it was even then getting up steam to go to St. Kentigern. Would they kindly come on board until it was ready? At an added word or two of explanation from the consul, the father accepted, preserving the same formal pride and stiffness, and the transfer was made. The consul, looking back as his gig swept round again towards Bannock pier, received their parting salutations, and the first smile he had seen on the face of his grave little passenger. He thought it very sweet and sad.

He did not return to the Consulate at St. Kentigern until the next day. But he was somewhat surprised to find Mr. Robert Gray awaiting him, and upon some business which the young millionaire could have easily deputed to his captain or steward. As he still lingered the consul pleasantly referred to his generosity on the previous day, and hoped the passengers had given him no trouble.

"No," said Gray, with a slight simulation of carelessness. "In fact, I came up with them myself. I had nothing to do; it was Sunday, you know."

The consul lifted his eyebrows slightly.

"Yes, I saw them home," continued Gray, lightly. "In one of those by-streets not far from here; neat-looking house outside; inside, corkscrew stone staircase, like a lighthouse; fourth floor, no lift, but *she* circled up like a swallow! Flat—sitting-room, two bedrooms, and a kitchen—mighty snug and shipshape and pretty as a pink. They *own* it too—fancy *owning* part of a house! Seems to be a way they have here in St. Kentigern." He paused and then added: "Stayed there to a kind of high tea!"

"Indeed," said the consul.

"Why not? the old man wanted to return my 'hospitality' and square the account! He wasn't going to lie under any obligation to a stranger, and, by Jove! he made it a special point of honor! A Spanish grandee couldn't have been more punctilious. And with an accent, Jerusalem! like a northeaster off the Banks! But the feed was in good taste, and he only a mathematical instrument maker, on about twelve hundred dollars a year!"

"You seem to know all about him," said the consul, smilingly.

"Not so much as he does about me," returned Gray, with a half-perplexed face; "for he saw enough to admonish me about my extravagance, and even to intimate that that rascal Saunder-

son, my steward, was imposing on me. *She* took me to task, too, for not laying the yacht up on Sunday that the men could go 'to kirk,' and for swearing at a bargeman who ran across our bows. It's their perfect simplicity and sincerity in all this—that gets me! You'd have thought that the old man was my guardian, and the daughter my aunt." After a pause he uttered a reminiscent laugh. "She thought we eat and drank too much on the yacht, and wondered what we could find to do all day. All this, you know, in the gentlest, caressing sort of voice, as if she was really concerned, like one's own sister. Well, not exactly like mine"—he interrupted himself, grimly—"but, hang it all, you know what I mean. You know that our girls over there haven't got *that* trick of voice. Too much self-assertion, I reckon; things made too easy for them by us men. Habit of race, I dare say." He laughed a little. "Why, I mislaid my glove when I was coming away, and it was as good as a play to hear her commiserating and sympathizing, and hunting for it as if it were a lost baby."

"But you've seen Scotch girls before this," said the consul. "There were Lady Glairn's daughters, whom you took on a cruise."

"Yes, but the swell Scotch all imitate the English, as everybody else does, for the matter of that; our girls included; and they're all alike. Society makes 'em fit in together like tongued and grooved planks that will take any amount of holy-stoning and polish. It's like dropping into a dead calm, with every rope and spar that you know already reflected back from the smooth water upon you. It's mighty pretty, but it isn't getting on, you know." After a pause he added: "I asked them to take a little holiday cruise with me."

"And they declined," interrupted the consul.

Gray glanced at him quickly.

"Well, yes; that's all right enough. They don't know me, you see, but they do know you; and the fact is, I was thinking that as you're our consul here, don't you see, and sort of responsible for me, you might say that it was all right, you know. Quite the customary thing with us over there. And you might say, generally, who I am."

"I see," said the consul, deliberately. "Tell them you're Bob Gray, with more money and time than you know what to do with; that you have a fine taste for yachting and shooting and racing, and amusing yourself generally; that you find that *they*

amuse you, and you would like your luxury and your dollars to stand as an equivalent to their independence and originality; that, being a good Republican yourself, and recognizing no distinction of class, you don't care what this may mean to them, who are brought up differently; that after their cruise with you you don't care what life, what friends, or what jealousies they return to; that you know no ties, no responsibilities beyond the present, and that you are not a marrying man."

"Look here, I say, aren't you making a little too much of this?" said Gray, stiffly.

The consul laughed. "I should be glad to know that I am."

Gray rose. "We'll be dropping down the river to-morrow," he said, with a return of his usual lightness, "and I reckon I'll be toddling down to the wharf. Good-bye, if I don't see you again."

He passed out. As the consul glanced from the window he observed, however, that Mr. Gray was "toddling" in quite another direction than the wharf. For an instant he half regretted that he had not suggested, in some discreet way, the conclusion he had arrived at after witnessing the girl's parting with the middle-aged passenger the day before. But he reflected that this was something he had only accidentally overseen, and was the girl's own secret.

When the summer had so waxed in its fullness that the smoke of factory chimneys drifted high, permitting glimpses of fairly blue sky; when the grass in St. Kentigern's proudest park took on a less sober green in the comfortable sun, and even in the thickest shade there was no chilliness, the good St. Kentigerners recognized that the season had arrived to "go down the river," and that it was time for them to betake themselves, with rugs, macintoshes, and umbrellas, to the breezy lochs and misty hillsides for which the neighborhood of St. Kentigern is justly famous. So when it came to pass that the blinds were down in the highest places, and the most exclusive pavements of St. Kentigern were echoless and desolate, the consul heroically tore himself from the weak delight of basking in the sunshine and followed the others.

He soon found himself settled at the furthest end of a long narrow loch, made longer and narrower by the steep hillside of rock and heather which flanked its chilly surface on either side, and whose inequalities were lost in the firs and larches that filled

ravine and chasm. The fragrant road which ran sinuously through their shadowy depths was invisible from the loch; no protuberance broke the seemingly sheer declivity; the even skyline was indented in two places—one where it was cracked into a fanciful resemblance of a human profile, the other where it was curved like a bowl. Need it be said that one was distinctly recognized as the silhouette of a prehistoric giant, and that the other was his drinking-cup; need it be added that neither lent the slightest human suggestion to the solitude? A toy-like pier extending into the loch, midway from the barren shore, only heightened the desolation. And when the little steamboat that occasionally entered the loch took away a solitary passenger from the pier-head, the simplest parting was invested with a dreary loneliness that might have brought tears to the most hardened eye.

Still, when the shadow of either hillside was not reaching across the loch, the meridian sun, chancing upon this coy mirror, made the most of it. Then it was that, seen from above, it flashed like a falchion lying between the hills; then its reflected glory, striking up, transfigured the two acclivities, tipped the cold heather with fire, gladdened the funereal pines, and warmed the ascetic rocks. And it was in one of those rare, passionate intervals that the consul, riding along the wooded track and turning his eyes from their splendors, came upon a little house.

It had once been a sturdy cottage, with a grim endurance and inflexibility which even some later and lighter additions had softened rather than changed. On either side of the door, against the bleak whitewashed wall, two tall fuchsias relieved the rigid blankness with a show of color. The windows were prettily draped with curtains, caught up with gay ribbons. In a stony, pound-like inclosure there was some attempt at floral cultivation, but all quite recent. So, too, were a wicker garden seat, a bright Japanese umbrella, and a tropical hammock suspended between two Arctic-looking bushes, which the rude and rigid forefathers of the hamlet would have probably resented.

He had just passed the house when a charming figure slipped across the road before him. To his surprise it was the young girl he had met a few months before on the Skyscraper. But the Tam o' Shanter was replaced by a little straw hat; and a light dress, summery in color and texture, but more in keeping with her rustic surroundings, seemed as grateful and rare as the sunshine. Without knowing why, he had an impression that it

was her own making—a gentle plagiarism of the style of her more fortunate sisters, but with a demure restraint all her own. As she recognized him a faint color came to her cheek, partly from surprise, partly from some association. To his delighted greeting she responded by informing him that her father had taken the cottage he had just passed, where they were spending a three weeks' vacation from his business. It was not so far from St. Kentigern but that he could run up for a day to look after the shop. Did the consul not think it was wise?

Quite ready to assent to any sagacity in those clear brown eyes, the consul thought it was. But was it not, like wisdom, sometimes lonely?

Ah! no. There was the loch and the hills and the heather; there were her flowers; did he not think they were growing well? and at the head of the loch there was the old tomb of the Mc-Hulishes, and some of the coffins were still to be seen.

Perhaps emboldened by the consul's smile, she added, with a more serious precision which was, however, lost in the sympathizing caress of her voice, "And would you not be getting off and coming in and resting a wee bit before you go further? It would be so good of you, and father would think it so kind. And he will be there now, if you're looking."

The consul looked. The old man was standing in the doorway of the cottage, as respectably uncompromising as ever, with the slight concession to his rural surroundings of wearing a Tam o' Shanter and easy slippers. The consul dismounted and entered. The interior was simply, but tastefully furnished. It struck him that the Scotch prudence and economy, which practically excluded display and meretricious glitter, had reached the simplicity of the truest art and the most refined wealth. He felt he could understand Gray's enthusiasm, and by an odd association of ideas he found himself thinking of the resigned face of the lonely passenger on the Skyscraper.

"Have you heard any news of your friend who went to Rio?" he asked, pleasantly, but without addressing himself particularly to either.

There was a perceptible pause; doubtless of deference to her father on the part of the young girl, and of the usual native conscientious caution on the part of the father, but neither betrayed any embarrassment or emotion. "No; he would not be writing yet," she at length said, simply, "he would be waiting until he was settled to his business. Jamie would be waiting until he

could say how he was doing, father?" she appealed interrogatively to the old man.

"Aye, James Gow would not fash himself to write compliments and gossip till he knew his position and work," corroborated the old man. "He'll not be going two thousand miles to send us what we can read in the *St. Kentigern Herald*. But," he added, suddenly, with a recall of cautiousness, "perhaps *you* will be hearing of the ship?"

"The consul will not be remembering what he hears of all the ships," interposed the young girl, with the same gentle affectation of superior worldly knowledge which had before amused him. "We'll be wearying him, father," and the subject dropped.

The consul glancing around the room again, but always returning to the sweet and patient seriousness of the young girl's face and the grave decorum of her father, would have liked to ask another question, but it was presently anticipated; for when he had exhausted the current topics, in which both father and daughter displayed a quiet sagacity, and he had gathered a sufficient knowledge of their character to seem to justify Gray's enthusiasm, and was rising to take his leave, the young girl said timidly,

"Would ye not let Bessie take your horse to the grass-field over yonder, and yourself stay with us to dinner? It would be most kind, and you would meet a great friend of yours who will be here."

"Mr. Gray?" suggested the consul, audaciously. Yet he was greatly surprised when the young girl said quietly, "Aye."

"He'll be coming in the loch with his yacht," said the old man. "It's not so expensive lying here as at Bannock, I'm thinking; and the men cannot gang ashore for drink. Eh, but it's an awful waste o' pounds, shillings and pence, keeping these gowks in idleness with no feeshin' nor carrying of passengers."

"Aye, but it's better Mr. Gray should pay them for being decent and well-behaved on board his ship, than that they should be out of work and rioting in taverns and lodging-houses. And you yourself, father, remember the herrin' fishers that come ashore at Ardie, and the deck-hands of the excursion boat, and the language they'll be using."

"Have you had a cruise in the yacht?" asked the consul, quickly.

"Aye," said the father, "we have been up and down the loch, and around the far point, but not for boardin' or lodgin' the night, nor otherwise conteenuing or parteecipating. I have explained to Mr. Gray that we must return to our own home and our own porridge at evening, and he has agreed, and even come with us. He's a decent enough lad, and not above instructin' but extraordinar' extravagant."

"Ye know, father," interposed the young girl, "he talks of fitting up the yacht for the fishing, and taking some of his most decent men on shares. He says he was very fond of fishing off the Massachusetts coast, in America. It will be, I'm thinking," she said, suddenly turning to the consul with an almost pathetic appeal in her voice, "a great occupation for the rich young men over there."

The consul, desperately struggling with a fanciful picture of Mr. Robert Gray as a herring fisher, thought gravely that it "might be." But he thought still more gravely, though silently, of this singular companionship, and was somewhat anxious to confront his friend with his new acquaintances. He had not long to wait. The sun was just dipping behind the hill when the yacht glided into the lonely loch. A boat was put off, and in a few moments Robert Gray was climbing the little path from the loch.

Had the consul expected any embarrassment or lover-like consciousness on the face of Mr. Gray at their unexpected meeting, he would have been disappointed. Nor was the young man's greeting of father and daughter, whom he addressed as Mr. and Miss Callender, marked by any tenderness or hesitation. On the contrary, a certain seriousness and quiet reticence, unlike Gray, which might have been borrowed from his new friends, characterized his speech and demeanor. Beyond this freemasonry of sad repression there was no significance of look or word passed between these two young people. The girl's voice retained its even pathos. Gray's grave politeness was equally divided between her and her father. He corroborated what Callender had said of his previous visits without affectation or demonstration; he spoke of the possibilities of his fitting up the yacht for the fishing season with a practical detail and economy that left the consul's raillery ineffective. Even when, after dinner, the consul purposely walked out in the garden with the father, Gray and Ailsa presently followed them without lingering or undue precipitation, and with no change of voice or manner. The consul was

perplexed. Had the girl already told Gray of her lover across the sea, and was this singular restraint their joint acceptance of their fate; or was he mistaken in supposing that their relations were anything more than the simple friendship of patron and protégée? Gray was rich enough to indulge in such a fancy, and the father and daughter were too proud to ever allow it to influence their own independence. In any event the consul's right to divulge the secret he was accidentally possessed of seemed more questionable than ever. Nor did there appear to be any opportunity for a confidential talk with Gray, since it was proposed that the whole party should return to the yacht for supper, after which the consul should be dropped at the pier-head, distant only a few minutes from his hotel, and his horse sent to him the next day.

A faint moon was shimmering along the surface of Loch Dour in icy little ripples when they pulled out from the shadows of the hillside. By the accident of position, Gray, who was steering sat beside Ailsa in the stern, while the consul and Mr. Callender were further forward, although within hearing. The faces of the young people were turned towards each other, yet in the cold moonlight the consul fancied they looked as impassive and unemotional as statues. The few distant, far-spaced lights that trembled on the fading shore, the lonely glitter of the water, the blackness of the pine-clad ravines seemed to be a part of this repression, until the vast melancholy of the lake appeared to meet and overflow them like an advancing tide. Added to this, there came from time to time the faint sound and smell of the distant, desolate sea.

The consul, struggling manfully to keep up a spasmodic discussion on Scotch diminutives in names, found himself mechanically saying;

“And James you call Jamie?”

“Aye; but ye would say, to be pure Scotch, ‘Hamish,’” said Mr. Callender, precisely. The girl, however, had not spoken; but Gray turned to her with something of his old gayety.

“And I suppose you would call me ‘Robbie?’”

“Ah, no!”

“What then?”

“Robin.”

Her voice was low yet distinct, but she had thrown into the two syllables such infinite tenderness, that the consul was for an instant struck with an embarrassment akin to that he had felt in



the cabin of the Skyscraper, and half expected the father to utter a shocked protest. And to save what he thought would be an appalling silence, he said with a quiet laugh :

"That's the fellow who 'made the assembly shine' in the song, isn't it?"

"That was Robin Adair," said Gray, quietly; "unfortunately I would only be 'Robin Gray,' and that's quite another song."

"*Auld* Robin Gray, sir, deestinctly '*auld*' in the song," interrupted Mr. Callender with stern precision; "and I'm thinking he was not so very unfortunate either."

The discussion of Scotch diminutive halting here, the boat sped on silently to the yacht. But although Robert Gray, as host, recovered some of his usual lightheartedness, the consul failed to discover anything in his manner to indicate the lover, nor did Miss Ailsa after her single lapse of tender accent exhibit the least consciousness. It was true that their occasional frank allusions to previous conversations seemed to show that their opportunities had not been restricted, but nothing more. He began again to think he was mistaken.

As he wished to return early, and yet not hasten the Callenders he prevailed upon Gray to send him to the pier-head first, and not disturb the party. As he stepped into the boat, something in the appearance of the coxswain awoke an old association in his mind. The man at first seemed to avoid his scrutiny, but when they were well away from the yacht, he said hesitatingly :

"I see you remember me, sir. But if it's all the same to you, I've got a good berth here and would like to keep it."

The consul had a flash of memory. It was the boatswain of the Skyscraper one of the least objectionable of the crew. "But what are you doing here? you shipped for the voyage," he said sharply.

"Yes, but I got away at Key West, when I knew what was coming. I wasn't on her when she was abandoned."

"Abandoned!" repeated the consul. "What the d——! Do you mean to say she was wrecked?"

"Well, yes—you know what I mean, sir. It was an understood thing. She was over-insured and scuttled in the Bahamas. It was a put-up job, and I reckoned I was well out of it."

"But there was a passenger! What of him?" demanded the consul, anxiously.

"Dunno! But I reckon he got away. There wasn't any of

the crew lost that I know of. Let's see, he was an engineer, wasn't he? I reckon he had to take a hand at the pumps, and his chances with the rest."

"Does Mr. Gray know of this?" asked the consul after a pause.

The man stared.

"Not from me, sir. You see it was nothin' to him, and I didn't care talking much about the Skyscraper. It was hushed up in the papers. You won't go back on me, sir?"

"You don't know what became of the passenger?"

"No! But he was a Scotchman, and they're bound to fall on their feet somehow!"

The December fog that overhung St. Kentigern had thinned sufficiently to permit the passage of a few large snowflakes, soiled in their descent, until in color and consistency they spotted the steps of the Consulate and the umbrellas of the passers-by like sprinklings of gray mortar. Nevertheless the consul thought the streets preferable to the persistent gloom of his office and sallied out. Youthful mercantile St. Kentigern strode sturdily past him in the lightest covert coats; Collegiate St. Kentigern fluttered by in the scantiest of red gowns, shaming the furs that defended his more exotic blood; and the bare red feet of a few factory girls, albeit their head and shoulders were draped and hooded in thick shawls, filled him with a keen sense of his effeminacy. Everything of earth, air and sky, and even the faces of those he looked upon, seemed to be set in the hard, patient endurance of the race. Everywhere on that dismal day, he fancied he could see this energy without restlessness, this earnestness without geniality, all grimly set against the hard environment of circumstance and weather.

The consul turned into one of the main arteries of St. Kentigern, a wide street that, however, began and ended inconsequently, and with half a dozen social phases in as many blocks. Here the snow ceased, the fog thickened suddenly with the waning day, and the consul found himself isolated and cut off on a block which he did not remember, with the clatter of an invisible tramway in his ears. It was a block of small houses with smaller shop-fronts. The one immediately before him seemed to be an optician's, but the dimly lighted windows also displayed the pathetic reinforcement of a few watches, cheap jewelry on cards and several cairngorm brooches and pins set in

silver. It occurred to him that he wanted a new watch-crystal, and that he would procure it here and inquire his way. Opening the door he perceived that there was no one in the shop, but from behind the counter another open door disclosed a neat sitting-room, so close to the street that it gave the casual customer the sensation of having intruded upon domestic privacy. The consul's entrance tinkled a small bell which brought a figure to the door. It was Ailsa Callender.

The consul was startled. He had not seen her since he had brought to their cottage the news of the shipwreck with a precaution and delicacy that their calm self-control and patient resignation, however, seemed to make almost an impertinence. But this was no longer the handsome shop in the chief thoroughfare with its two shopmen, which he previously knew as "Callender's." And Ailsa here! What misfortune had befallen them?

Whatever it was there was no shadow of it in her clear eyes and frank yet timid recognition of him. Falling in with her stoical and reticent acceptance of it, he nevertheless gathered that the Callenders had lost money in some invention which James Gow had taken with him to Rio, but which was sunk in the ship. With this revelation of a business interest in what he had believed was only a sentimental relation, the consul ventured to continue his inquiries. Mr. Gow had escaped with his life and had reached Honduras, where he expected to try his fortunes anew. It might be a year or two longer before there were any results. Did the consul know anything of Honduras? There was coffee there—so she and her father understood. All this with a little hopefulness, no irritation, but a divine patience in her eyes. The consul, who found that his watch required extensive repairing, and had suddenly developed an inordinate passion for cairngorms, watched her as she opened the show-case with no affectation of unfamiliarity with her occupation, but with all her old serious concern. Surely she would have made as thorough a shop-girl as she would—His half-formulated thought took the shape of a question.

"Have you seen Mr. Gray since his return from the Mediterranean?"

Ah! one of the brooches had slipped from her fingers to the bottom of the case. There was an interval or two of pathetic murmuring, with her fair head under the glass, before she could find it; then she lifted her eyes to the consul. They were still slightly suffused with her sympathetic concern. The stone,

which was set in a thistle—the national emblem—did he not know it?—had dropped out. But she could put it in. It was pretty and not expensive. It was marked twelve shillings on the card, but he could have it for ten shillings. No, she had not seen Mr. Gray since they had lost their fortune. (It struck the consul as none the less pathetic that she seemed really to believe in their former opulence.) They could not be seeing him there in a small shop, and they could not see him elsewhere. It was far better as it was. Yet she paused a moment when she had wrapped up the brooch. “You’d be seeing him yourself sometimes?” she added, gently.

“Perhaps.”

“Then you’ll not mind saying how my father and myself are sometimes thinking of his goodness and kindness,” she went on, in a voice whose tenderness seemed to increase with the formal precision of her speech.

“Certainly.”

“And you’ll say we’re not forgetting him.”

“I promise.”

As she handed him the parcel her lips softly parted in what might have been equally a smile or a sigh.

He was able to keep his promise sooner than he had imagined. It was only a few weeks later that, arriving in London, he found Gray’s hat-box and bag in the vestibule of his club, and that gentleman himself in the smoking-room. He looked tanned and older.

“I only came from Southampton an hour ago, where I left the yacht. And,” shaking the consul’s hand cordially, “how’s everything and everybody up at old St. Kentigern?”

The consul thought fit to include his news of the Callenders in reference to that query, and, with his eyes fixed on Gray, dwelt at some length on their change of fortune. Gray took his cigar from his mouth, but did not lift his eyes from the fire. Presently he said, “I suppose that’s why Callender declined to take the shares I offered him in the fishing scheme. You know I meant it, and would have done it.”

“Perhaps he had other reasons.”

“What do you mean?” said Gray, facing the consul suddenly.

“Look here, Gray,” said the consul, “did Miss Callender or her father ever tell you she was engaged?”

“Yes; but what’s that to do with it?”

“A good deal. Engagements, you know, are sometimes

forced, unsuitable, or unequal, and are broken by circumstances. Callender is proud."

Gray turned upon the consul the same look of gravity that he had worn on the yacht—the same look that the consul even fancied he had seen in Ailsa's eyes. "That's exactly where you're mistaken in her," he said slowly. "A girl like that gives her word and keeps it. She waits, hopes, accepts what may come—breaks her heart, if you will, but not her word. Come, let us talk of something else. How did he—that man Gow—lose Callender's money?"

The consul did not see the Callenders again on his return, and perhaps did not think it necessary to report the meeting. But one morning he was delighted to find an official document from New York upon his desk, asking him to communicate with David Callender, of St. Kentigern, and on proof of his identity, giving him authority to draw the sum of five thousand dollars, damages awarded for the loss of certain property on the Skyscraper, at the request of James Gow. Yet it was with mixed sensations that the consul sought the little shop of the optician with this convincing proof of Gow's faithfulness and the indissolubility of Ailsa's engagement. That there was some sad understanding between the girl and Gray he did not doubt, and perhaps it was not strange that he felt a slight partisanship for his friend, whose nature had so strangely changed. Miss Ailsa was not there. Her father explained that her health had required a change, and she was visiting some friends on the river.

"I'm thinkin' that the atmosphere is not so pure here. It is deficient in ozone. I noticed it myself in the early morning. No! it was not the confinement of the shop, for she never cared to go out."

He received the announcement of his good fortune with unshaken calm and great practical consideration of detail. He would guarantee his identity to the consul. As for James Gow, it was no more than fair, and what he had expected of him. As to its being an equivalent of his loss, he could not tell until the facts were before him.

"Miss Ailsa," suggested the consul, venturously, "will be pleased to hear again from her old friend, and that he is succeeding."

"I'm not so sure that ye could call it 'succeeding,'" returned the old man, carefully wiping the glasses of a pair of spectacles that he held critically to the light, "when ye consider that, say-

ing nothing of the waste of valuable time, it only puts James Gow back where he was when he went away."

"But any man who has had the pleasure of knowing Mr. and Miss Callender would be glad to be on that footing," said the consul, with polite significance.

"I'm not agreeing with you there," said Mr. Callender, quietly; "and I'm observing in ye of late a tendency to combine business wi' compleement. But it was kind of ye to call; and I'll be sending ye the authorization."

Which he did. But the consul, passing through the locality a few weeks later, was somewhat concerned to find the shop closed, with others on the same block, behind a hoarding that indicated rebuilding and improvement. Further inquiry elicited the fact that the small leases had been bought up by some capitalist, and that Mr. Callender, with the others, had benefited thereby. But there was no trace nor clue to his present locality. He and his daughter seemed to have again vanished with this second change in their fortunes.

It was a late March morning when the streets were dumb with snow, and the air was filled with flying granulations that tinkled against the windows of the Consulate like fairy sleigh-bells, when there was a stamping of snow-clogged feet in the outer hall, and the door was opened to Mr. and Miss Callender. For an instant the consul was startled. The old man appeared as usual—erect, and as frigidly respectable as one of the icicles that fringed the window, but Miss Ailsa was, to his astonishment, brilliant with a new-found color, and sparkling with health and only half-repressed animation. The snow-flakes, scarcely melting on the brown head of this true daughter of the North, still crowned her hood; and, as she drew back her brown cloak and disclosed a plump little scarlet jacket and brown skirt, the consul could not resist her suggested likeness to some bright-eyed robin redbreast, to whom the inclement weather had given a charming audacity. And shy and demure as she still was, it was evident that some change had been wrought in her other than that evoked by the stimulus of her native sky and air.

To his eager questioning, the old man replied briefly that he had bought the old cottage at Loch Dour, where they were living, and where he had erected a small manufactory and laboratory for the making of his inventions which had become profitable. The consul reiterated his delight at meeting them again.

"I'm not so sure of that, sir, when you know the business on

which I come," said Callender, dropping rigidly in the chair, and clasping his hands over the crutch of a shepherd-like staff. "Ye mind, perhaps, that ye conveyed to me, ostensibly at the request of James Gow, a certain sum of money, for which I gave you a good and sufficient guarantee. I thought at the time that it was a most feckless and unbusiness-like proceeding on the part of James, as it was without corroboration or advice by letter; but I took the money."

"Do you mean to say that he made no allusion to it in his other letters?" interrupted the consul, glancing at Ailsa.

"There were no other letters at the time," said Callender dryly. "But about a month afterwards we *did* receive a letter from him inclosing a draft and a full return of the profits of the invention which *he had sold in Honduras*. Ye'll observe the deescrepancy! I then wrote to the bank on which I had drawn as you authorized me, and I found that they knew nothing of any damages awarded, but that the sum I had drawn had been placed to my credit by Mr. Robert Gray."

In a flash the consul recalled the one or two questions that Gray had asked him, and saw it all. For an instant he felt the whole bitterness of Gray's misplaced generosity—its exposure and defeat. He glanced again hopelessly at Ailsa. In the eye of that fresh, glowing, yet demure, young goddess, unhallowed as the thought might be, there was certainly a distinctly tremulous wink.

The consul took heart. "I believe I need not say, Mr. Callender," he began with some stiffness, "that this is as great a surprise to me as to you. I had no reason to believe the transaction other than *bonâ fide*, and acted accordingly. If my friend, deeply sympathizing with your previous misfortune, has hit upon a delicate, but unbusiness-like way of assisting you temporarily—I say *temporarily*, because it must have been as patent to him as to you, that you would eventually find out his generous deceit—you surely can forgive him for the sake of his kind intention. Nay more, may I point out to you that you have no right to assume that this benefaction was intended exclusively for you; if Mr. Gray, in his broader sympathy with you and your daughter, has in this way chosen to assist and strengthen the position of a gentleman so closely connected with you, but still struggling with hard fortune——"

"I'd have ye know, sir," interrupted the old man, rising to his feet, "that ma friend Mr. James Gow is as independent of

yours as he is of me and mine. He has married, sir, a Mrs. Hernandez, the rich widow of a coffee-planter, and now is the owner of the whole estate, minus the incumbrance of three children. And now, sir, you'll take this,"—he drew from his pocket an envelope. "It's a draft for five thousand dollars, with the ruling rate of interest computed from the day I received it till this day, and ye'll give it to your frien' when ye see him. And ye'll just say to him from me——"

But Miss Ailsa, with a spirit and independence that challenged her father's, here suddenly fluttered between them with sparkling eyes and outstretched hands.

"And ye'll say to him from *me* that a more honorable, noble and generous man, and a kinder, truer, and better friend than he, cannot be found anywhere! And that the foolishhest and most extravagant thing he ever did is better than the wisest and most prudent thing that anybody else ever did, could, or would do! And if he was a bit overproud—it was only because those about him were overproud and foolish. And you'll tell him that we're wearying for him! And when you give him that daft letter from father you'll give him this bit line from me," she went on rapidly as she laid a tiny note in his hand. "And," with wicked dancing eyes that seemed to snap the last bond of repression, "ye'll give him *that* too, and say I sent it!"

There was a stir in the official apartment! The portraits of Lincoln and Washington rattled uneasily in their frames; but it was no doubt only a discreet blast of the north wind that drowned the echo of a kiss.

"Ailsa!" gasped the shocked Mr. Callender.

"Ah! but, father, if it had not been for *him* we would not have known Robin."

It was the last that the consul saw of Ailsa Callender; for the next summer when he called at Loch Dour she was Mrs. Gray.





## ETCHING: A RAY OF SUNSHINE\*

BY ANNE McBRIDE

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THE deed was done. He had only a few short minutes more to live. He took out his little silver watch—his sole remaining luxury, and holding it in his hand watched with painful interest the hands as they crept relentlessly on. He could hardly understand that soon his unhappy life would be as a tale that is told; that for him there would no longer be the daily struggle to keep the breath of life in his weak body; no more concealment, no more travelling from place to place to avoid pursuit, no more misery, no more danger. What if they should find him in the morning? He had read the day before that the police had at last found a sure trace of Ivan Vesselitzsky, the celebrated Nihilist; that his capture was now certain. "Capture"—he had shuddered at the word; it had haunted him in letters of blood—but no! anything rather than that. Was he to wear out his life, a prisoner, in a Siberian mine? He, who was to have set all his countrymen free? The thought that he would be beyond their reach pleased him, and the glass on the table there would tell them all. He felt himself growing weaker. How many more minutes are there left? He can hardly see, but he knows there is no time to lose. Staggering to his feet, he starts towards the little window in the corner. There the roof slopes so sharply towards the eaves that he bends feebly, and with a passing feeling of contempt for his own weakness, falls heavily on his knees. He must reach the window before the end comes, although to make another effort seems impossible. He cannot die without bidding a last farewell to the country he has loved so passionately. Eagerly his eye scans the landscape. See, the sun will soon rise! A smile transfigures the pale face at the window.

Now the horizon is beautiful in the colors of the dawn. As the sun rises to its full majesty, a beam of light seems to dart like a promise of happiness towards the watcher, who stretches out his weak arms to meet it with a look of ineffable peace—but when it shines on the haggard face, it is the face of the dead.

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## GERMELSHAUSEN\*

BY FRIEDRICH GERSTÄCKER

*Famous Story Series*

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NE warm day in the autumn of 184— a traveller could be seen walking along the highway between Marisfeld and Wichtelhausen. He was young, full of life and energy, and the broad-brimmed hat, worn on one side, the somewhat threadbare velvet jacket, the white shirt underneath, loosely fastened at the throat by a black silk neckerchief, all proclaimed the artist; even without the added testimony of the small, neatly-finished portfolio strapped upon his knapsack.

When he had left Marisfeld about a quarter of an hour behind him, the village bells began to ring for church. He stood still, leaning upon his staff and listening intently. Long after the sound of the bells had ceased, he stood there. His thoughts had flown back to his home, to his mother and sisters whom he was leaving behind, and a strange feeling of sadness came over him. But with his natural light-heartedness, he cast such thoughts aside, and, with a smile, waved a greeting in the direction of home; then continued cheerfully on his way.

The road was dusty, and the sun hot, and after a time he began to look about for a pleasanter path. He found one at length, which passed by the ruins of an old stone bridge and led into a valley, well



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shaded by a thick growth of alder bushes. As he had no other object than enriching his portfolio, he decided to explore a bit in this direction.

No signposts appeared to enlighten him as to his whereabouts, he met no one, and the silence was profound. He did not wonder at this, knowing the habits of the peasants in that part of the country. Sunday is their day of rest in the full sense of the word; half the day they sleep, and the other half is spent in the tavern. The thought of a cooling mug of beer, called up by these reflections, was very enticing, but as no tavern seemed likely to be forthcoming in this wilderness, he threw himself down by the brookside, and took a long, deep draught of the clear mountain water. Much refreshed, he picked up his knapsack and continued to follow the little path, wholly unconcerned as to where it led him. After wandering an hour or two, stopping now and then for a sketch, he came to a sudden turn in the path, and saw, at a little distance before him, a young girl sitting on an old stone, the remains of some ancient shrine. Screened by the alders, he approached, unseen by her, but he had hardly emerged from their shelter, when she sprang up with a cry of joy and flew toward him.

Arnold (as our young artist was called) stopped in surprise. The girl, who wore a very singular but pretty peasant costume, was scarcely seventeen years old and extremely beautiful. As she ran toward him with outstretched arms, Arnold saw that she had mistaken him for some one else; and, indeed, the moment she saw his face, she perceived her mistake, stopped short in dismay, turned first white, then red, and finally said in great embarrassment:

“Oh, sir, do not take it ill, I thought——”

“That it was your sweetheart, didn’t you, my dear?” said the young man, laughing gayly. “And now you are vexed because it is another man. Please don’t be angry with me because I’m not the right one.”

“Oh, how can you speak so!” faltered the girl. “How could I be angry? But if you only knew how I had waited and longed for his coming!”

“Then he is not worth waiting for any longer. If I had been in his place I would not have kept you waiting a moment.”

“How strangely you speak!” said the girl. “He would certainly have been here long ago if it had been possible. Perhaps he is ill—or dead!” she added, with a sigh.

"Has he left you long without news of him?"

"Very, very long."

"Then he must live a long way from here?"

"In Bischofsroda."

"Bischofsroda!" cried Arnold. "I have just spent four weeks there, and know every man, woman and child in the village. What is his name?"

"Heinrich, Heinrich Vollgut," answered the girl shyly, "son of the Schulze (chief magistrate)."

"Hm," remarked Arnold. "I know the Schulze well, and his name is Bauerling. I never heard the name of Vollgut."

"It is not likely that you know all the people in the village," said the girl, a quiet smile stealing over her beautiful, mournful face, giving it an added charm. Then she sighed deeply.

"He promised me so faithfully!" she said.

"Then he will surely come," said Arnold, reassuringly. "A man must have a heart of stone to break a promise to you."

"But I must not wait longer for him now," she said. "Father will be angry if I am not home by noon-time."

"Where do you live?"

"A little farther on in the valley," she answered. "Don't you hear the bells? They are just ringing for the close of mass."

Arnold listened. He could hear the slow strokes of a bell, but the tones were harsh and discordant. A thick mist was lying over that part of the valley from which the sound came.

"Your bell is cracked," he said, with a laugh.

"Yes, I know," the girl replied indifferently. "It does sound badly, and we ought to have it recast. But what does it matter? It answers the purpose, and we are used to it."

"What is the name of your village?"

"Germelshausen."

"And can I get to Wichtelhausen this way?"

"Yes, it is only a short walk."

"Then I will keep on with you to your village, and I can get my dinner at the tavern, if it is a good one."

"It is only too good," sighed the girl, with a backward glance to see if Heinrich might be coming after all.

"Can a tavern be too good?"

"Yes, for the peasants," she answered earnestly, as they walked on slowly. "The men waste their time there and neglect their work. But, of course, it is different with gentlemen like you who don't work. The peasants earn your bread for you."

"No, indeed," cried Arnold. "The peasant makes it, certainly, but we have to earn it ourselves, and hard enough it is, too, sometimes, for the peasant looks out that his work is well paid."

"But you do not work?"

"I will show you how I work! Sit down there on that stone."

"But what shall I do there?"

"Only sit down," cried Arnold, hurriedly snatching sketch-book and pencil. "I will be through in a moment. I want to take your picture away as a remembrance."

"Are you a painter?"

"Yes."

"Then you can paint over the pictures in our church. They need it badly."

"What is your name?" asked Arnold, rapidly sketching the outlines of the girl's charming face.

"Gertrud."

"And who is your father?"

"He is the Schulze of the village, and if you are a painter you must come home with me to dinner. Then you can talk it all over with my father."

"About the paintings in the church?" asked Arnold with a smile.

"Yes," she replied, earnestly, "and you must stay with us a long, long time, until—until our day comes again and the pictures are finished."

"Well, we'll see about that later, Gertrud. But your Heinrich may not like it to have me so much with you."

"Heinrich? Oh, he will not come now."

"But he may come to-morrow."



"No," said Gertrud, calmly. "As he was not there at the appointed hour he will stay away until our day comes again."

"Your *day*? What do you mean by that?"

She looked at him with large and earnest eyes, and did not reply, and her gaze grew far away and sorrowful. Arnold forgot all else in his eagerness to finish the sketch, for there was something almost unearthly in her beauty at this moment.

Finally she sprang up, saying that she must go. Arnold quickly put his things together and hastened to join her. The village was nearer than he had supposed. A row of fruit-trees, which he had taken for an alder thicket, hid it, but, these passed, the old smoke-blackened houses and low church tower came into view. The heavy mist which Arnold had seen in the distance still hung over the village, and the sun could only cast a feeble yellow light on the old weather-beaten roofs. But Arnold bestowed scarcely a glance upon all this, for Gertrud had quietly taken his hand, and together they entered the main street of the village. With her eyes steadily fixed on the ground, she led him on. They met few people, and all passed without a word of greeting. This, in a country where the omission of the custom-

ary "Good-day" or "God greet you" was a thing unheard of, filled Arnold with surprise. Some, indeed, stopped and looked after them, but no one spoke.

Arnold's artistic eye could not fail to be attracted by the strange old houses with their pointed gables and weather-beaten thatched roofs. The small windows had the appearance of not having been washed for a very long while, and the round leaded panes reflected all the colors of the rainbow on their dingy surfaces. Here and there a casement opened as they passed and a pair of curious eyes would follow them down the street. Arnold noticed,



too, the peculiar costume of the people, which differed essentially from that of the neighboring villages.

The silence was unbroken until Arnold, feeling it become

almost painful, asked her if they always kept Sunday so strictly in Germelshausen.

"The people do not even greet each other as they pass," he said, "and if it were not for hearing a dog bark now and then, one might think the whole village was dead and buried."

"It is noon-time," Gertrud said, "and the people are not disposed to talk, you will find them all the merrier this evening."

"Thank Heavens!" cried Arnold, "there at least are some children playing in the street. It began to seem almost uncanny."

"There is my father's house," said Gertrud, softly.

"But I must not come upon him so unexpectedly, just at dinner-time."

"They are expecting us," said Gertrud, quietly, "and you need not fear a cold reception."

"They are expecting us? Oh, you mean yourself and Heinrich! Oh, Gertrud, if you will only take me to-day in his place, I will stay with you and as long—until you send me away yourself!"

He had spoken the last words almost involuntarily, at the same time gently pressing the hand that still held his.



Gertrud stood still, looked at him earnestly, and asked:

"Do you really mean that?"

"Indeed I do!" he cried, completely carried away by the girl's beauty. Gertrud made no reply but seemed to be pondering the words of her companion. Finally she stopped before a large house with stone steps and an iron railing.

"This is where I live, sir," she said, suddenly becoming shy again. "Pray come in and see my father; he will be proud to welcome you at his table."

Before Arnold could make any reply the Schulze appeared in the doorway and at the same moment a friendly looking old woman nodded to them from the window.

"How long you have been gone, Gertrud," said her father, "and fie! fie! What a handsome young fellow you have brought home with you!"

"My dear sir——"

"No explanations on the doorstep, I beg of you. Come in, the dumplings are ready and will be getting cold."

"But that is not Heinrich!" called the old woman from the window; "haven't I always said he wouldn't come back!"

"There, there mother," said the Schulze, "he may come yet;" and holding out his hand to Arnold, he continued, "You are welcome to Germelshausen, young man, wherever the child may have found you. And now come in to dinner; we'll talk later." And without giving the young man any further opportunity for apologies he shook him heartily by the hand and led him into the house.

The air was heavy and mouldy in the narrow entry. The plaster had fallen from the walls and seemed to have been hastily swept aside. A single dingy window at the farther end scarcely admitted the necessary light; and the stairway which led to the upper story was old and falling to pieces.

He had very little time, however, to observe all this, for the next moment his hospitable host threw open the door of the living-room. It was low but spacious, the floor



freshly strewn with white sand, and in the middle stood a table covered with snowy linen, contrasting strangely with the somewhat disorderly appearance of the rest of the house.

Besides the old woman, who had now closed the window and drawn her chair up to the table, there were several rosy-cheeked children sitting in the corner, and a robust peasant woman, wearing, like the others, a costume wholly unlike that of the neighboring villages, was just opening the door for a maid, who entered with a great platter of dumplings. All hastened to their places, eager to begin, but nobody sat down, and the children, as it seemed to Arnold, cast glances of terror at their father.

The latter stood sullen and silent behind his chair, with eyes down-cast and knitted brow. Was he praying? Arnold observed that his lips were tightly pressed together, while his right hand hung clenched at his side. There was no sign of prayer in that face, only obstinate yet irresolute defiance. Gertrud went softly to him and laid her hand on his shoulder, while the old woman opposite stood speechless, looking at him with anxious and beseeching eyes.





"Let us eat!" he finally exclaimed harshly. "There is no help for it;" and, drawing up his chair and nodding to his guest, he seized the great soup-ladle and went to work. There was something almost uncanny in the man's behavior, and Arnold could but feel uncomfortable in the air of depression which hung over his companions.

The Schulze, however, was not the man to spoil his dinner with troubled thoughts. As he rapped on the table, the maid appeared again, bringing flasks and glasses, and with the taste of the old and costly wine, which he now offered, new life and spirits came into the company.

Through Arnold's veins the noble beverage streamed like liquid fire; never had he tasted anything like it. Gertrud also drank of it, and the old mother, who then seated herself at her spinning-wheel in the corner, and in a low voice sang a little song about the gay life in Germelshausen. The Schulze was like another man. He was now as gay and cheerful as he had before been grave and silent; and even Arnold could not resist the influence of this exquisite wine. Before he knew what had happened, the Schulze had seized his fiddle and was playing a lively dance tune, while he himself was whirling madly about the room with Gertrud in his arms, upsetting the chairs and knocking against the maid who was taking out the dishes, until the others shouted with laughter.

Suddenly all was still in the room and as Arnold turned in astonishment, the Schulze pointed toward the window with his bow and then laid the instrument back again in the large chest from which he had taken it. Arnold saw that a funeral procession was passing along the street.

Six men clad in white bore the casket on their shoulders, and behind it walked an old man leading a little fair-haired girl by the hand. The old man moved slowly and feebly, but the child who could scarcely have been four years old and could not realize who was lying in the casket, nodded here and there, wherever she saw a familiar face and laughed aloud at the gambols of two little dogs who were tumbling about the sidewalk.

The silence lasted only so long as the procession was in sight, then Gertrud spoke to Arnold.

"Come," she said, "you have romped enough; get your hat and let us take a walk. When we come back it will be time to go to the inn, for there is to be a dance this evening."

"A dance! That is good!" cried Arnold, "I came just at the

right time. You will give me the first dance, won't you, Gertrud?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

Arnold had already seized his hat and portfolio.

"What are you going to do with the book?" asked the Schulze.

"He draws, father," said Gertrud; "he has made a sketch of me already. Just look at it."



Arnold opened his sketch-book and handed him the drawing. The peasant examined it in silence.

"And you mean to take this away with you, and perhaps frame it and hang it on your wall?"

"Why not?"

"May he, father?"

"If he does not remain with us," said the Schulze, "I have no objection. But there is something wanting in the background."

"What is it?"

"The funeral procession that has just passed. Put that in and then you may take the picture with you."

"But the funeral procession with Gertrud?"

"There is room enough," said the Schulze, persistently.

Arnold shook his head laughingly, but the old man seemed determined, and Arnold, to pacify him, finally did as he desired, thinking he could change it later. With practiced hand he sketched from memory the figures which had just passed by. The whole family crowded about him, and watched with undisguised astonishment his rapid work.

"Is that right?" cried Arnold at last, as he sprang from his chair and held the picture at arm's length.

"Excellent!" replied the Schulze, with a nod of approval. "Now you may keep it. But go with Gertrud and take a look about the village," he added.

Arnold was only too eager to get out into the fresh air, and a few moments later found him walking by Gertrud's side along the village street.

It did not seem like the same place. Instead of the death-like silence of the morning a cheerful excitement seemed to pervade the village. Children played about the streets, the older people sat before their doors watching them, and the whole place, with its quaint old buildings, would have looked bright and home-like if only the sun could have found its way through the thick, brown smoke, which hung like a cloud over the roofs.

"Are there field or forest fires in the neighborhood?" asked Arnold. "No such smoke hangs over other villages, and it can not come from the chimneys."

"It is a mist which rises from the earth," said Gertrud, quietly. "But have you never heard of Germelshausen?"

"Never."

"That is strange, for the village is so old, so very old!"

"The houses certainly look so, and the people, too, have such an unusual appearance, and your accent is so unlike any that I have ever heard. Do you never go to other places?"

"Never," answered Gertrud, briefly.

"And there is not a single swallow to be seen! They cannot have flown away yet?"

"Long ago," replied the girl, wearily; "they never build their nests in Germelshausen now; perhaps they do not like the mist."

"But you do not always have that?"

"Always."

"Then that is the reason that your trees bear no fruit! Why, in Marisfield the trees are so heavily laden this year that they have been obliged to prop up the branches."

Gertrud answered not a word to this but walked on quietly, nodding now and then to the children whom they met, or exchanging a few low words with one of the young girls, perhaps in regard to the coming dance. It seemed to Arnold that everybody looked at him pityingly and his heart grew suddenly heavy, he knew not why.

They had now reached the outskirts of the village, where the silence and loneliness were almost death-like. The gardens looked as if it were many a year since human foot had trodden their paths. A group came toward them; it was the funeral procession returning to the village. As they walked on toward the graveyard, Arnold tried to enliven his companion, who



seemed all too serious, telling her of people and places which he had seen out in the great world. She had never seen a railroad, never even heard of one, and listened wonderingly to his explanations. She had not the least idea of the telegraph, as little of other modern inventions, and Arnold marvelled to find people living in Germany so isolated from the rest of the world, and having apparently no communication with it. Talking of these things they reached the graveyard. Arnold looked with surprise at the stones and monuments, which seemed to be of extreme antiquity.

"This is a very old stone," he said, as he bent over the nearest one and with great difficulty deciphered the fancy lettering of the inscription: "Anna Maria Berthold, born October first, 1188, died December second, 1224."

"That is my mother," said Gertrud, gravely, her eyes filling with tears.

"Your mother, my dear child?" cried Arnold in astonishment. "Your great-great-grandmother, you mean!"

"No," said Gertrud, "my own mother. That is my step-mother that you saw."

"But doesn't it say: 'died in 1224'?"

"What does it matter to me what the date is?" answered Gertrud, sadly; "it was hard, indeed, to lose her so young, and yet," she added, softly and mournfully, "it was perhaps better, much better, that God took her then, before——"

Completely puzzled, Arnold bent over the inscription more closely. Perhaps the second figure might be an eight instead of a two, for the quaint lettering made that not impossible. But the second two was exactly like the first, and as 1884 was still in the future it could not be intended for that. Perhaps the stone-cutter had made a mistake; anyway, he would not disturb Gertrud with troublesome questions. He left her, therefore, beside the stone, where she had sunk down and was softly praying, and examined some of the other monuments; but all, without exception, bore dates of centuries long past, even as early as 900, and no newer stones were to be found. Yet they still buried their dead here, as the last fresh grave testified.

From the low wall surrounding the graveyard there was a fine view of the old village, and Arnold, taking advantage of the opportunity, quickly sketched it. Even over this place the strange mist hung, while farther away toward the mountains the sun was shining bright and clear.

Suddenly from the village came the sound of the old cracked bell, and Gertrud, rising, motioned the young man with a friendly nod to follow her.

Arnold was quickly at her side.

"We must mourn no longer now," she said, smiling; "church is over and now the dance will begin!"

"But no one is coming out of the church," said Arnold.

"That is very natural," said Gertrud, laughing, "for no one goes in, not even the priest. Only the old sacristan is true to his post and rings for the beginning and end of the service."

"And do none of you go to church?"

"No; neither to mass nor to confession," answered Gertrud calmly; "we are at variance with the Pope, and the church is closed to us until we submit."

"But I never heard anything about that."

"It was a long while ago," she answered, carelessly. "But, see! there is the sacristan shutting up the church. He

doesn't go to the tavern in the evening, but sits alone at home."

"Does the priest go?"

"I should say he did, and is the gayest of all! He doesn't take it to heart."

"How did it all come to pass?" asked Arnold, almost less amazed at the facts than at the girl's perfect unconcern.

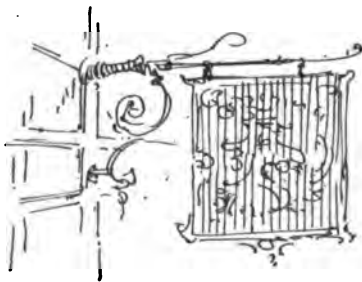
But Gertrud said that was a long story and the priest had written it all down in a big book which he might read if he understood Latin. "But," she added, warningly, "do not speak of it before my father. Now we must hurry home and get ready for the dance; we don't want to be the last."

They walked quickly through the village, where they passed groups of laughing young people already arrayed in their best. The tavern was hung with garlands and a triumphal arch had been erected before the door.

Arnold had finished his toilet when Gertrud called him to accompany her to the tavern. She was more charming than ever



in her simple yet rich costume, and a strange, weird feeling came over him as he drew her arm within his own, and they walked together through the gathering twilight.



"And to-morrow I must go," he sighed softly to himself. Unintentionally his words reached the ear of his companion, and she turned toward him with a smile.

"Do not be troubled about that," she said. "We shall be together—longer perhaps than you wish."

"And would you like to have me stay, Gertrud?" asked Arnold, with a wild feeling of joy.

"Indeed I would," she answered, without the least embarrass-

ment. "You are kind and friendly. My father likes you, I know; and——Heinrich did not come," she added softly, and yet half angrily.

"But suppose he should come to-morrow!"

"To-morrow," said Gertrud, and she looked earnestly at him with her great, dark eyes. "Oh, but first comes the long, long night. To-morrow! You will realize to-morrow what that word means." She broke suddenly off and cried gayly: "But let us not speak of such things to-day. This is our holiday, and we will not spoil it with sad thoughts."

Arnold wished to make some reply, but they were at the tavern door, and a burst of music from within drowned his words.

The hall was crowded, and Arnold felt ill at ease among so many strangers, whose curious costumes and speech repulsed



him, though he had found them charming in Gertrud. She had left him for a moment, but the young men seemed cordially disposed.

"You are quite right to stay with us," one said; "we lead a gay life here, and the time between goes quickly enough."

"The time between," repeated Arnold, wondering less at the expression than that the fellow should be so certain of his intention to make the village his home. "You think that I shall return?"

"Are you going away?" asked the young peasant quickly.

"To-morrow, yes, or the day after to-morrow. But I shall come back again."

"To-morrow?" laughed the youth, "then we'll talk about that to-morrow." The others smiled knowingly, but the young peasant offered to show Arnold through the different rooms.

All were crowded. In some were card-players with piles of gold before them; one was arranged for skittles; in others ring-

toss and similar games were going on. The young people ran laughing and singing from room to room, until suddenly a flourish of music from the orchestra gave the signal for the dance to begin. Arnold turned at the sound of Gertrud's voice.



"Come," she said, "I am the Schulze's daughter and must open the dance."

"What strange music," exclaimed Arnold, trying in vain to fall into the time of the weird melody.

"You'll get it in a moment," said Gertrud encouragingly.

The hall was soon filled. No one seemed inclined to dispute Arnold's right to dance with Gertrud as often as he liked, and only one thing disturbed him. As the discordant tones of the cracked bell sounded the first stroke of the hour, it was as if the touch of a magician's wand had fallen upon the dancers. The music ceased in the middle of a measure, the crowd of joyous dancers stood as if rooted to the ground, silent and motionless, and counted each stroke of the bell with mute lips. But when the last echo died away, the life and fun broke forth anew.

It was the same at eight, at nine and at ten o'clock, and when Arnold wished to know the cause of such strange behavior, Gertrud laid her finger on her lips and looked so grave and sorrowful that he would not for the world have troubled her with further questioning.

At ten o'clock there was a pause in the dancing and the orchestra led the way into the supper-room, where all went merrily. Wine flowed freely, and Gertrud



and Arnold drank from the same glass. The first stroke of eleven sounded, and again the gay laughter of the revellers ceased; again they listened breathlessly to the slow strokes of



the bell. A strange fear seized Arnold, he hardly knew why, and suddenly came the thought of his mother at home. Slowly he raised his glass and emptied it as a greeting to the loved one far away.

At the eleventh stroke of the bell the guests sprang from the table. The dancing was to begin again, and all hastened back to the hall.

"To whom did you drink that last glass?" asked Gertrud, as he led her back to the hall. Arnold hesitated with his reply.

Would Gertrud, perhaps, laugh at him if he told her? But then he remembered how fervently she had prayed that afternoon by her own mother's grave. In a low voice he said:

"To my mother."

Gertrud said nothing and walked quietly up the stairs at his side. But she laughed no more, and before they began to dance she asked him:

"Is your mother, then, so dear to you?"

"Dearer than life itself."

"And is she as fond of you?"

"Doesn't every mother love her child?"

"And if you never came back to her?"

"Poor mother," said Arnold, "her heart would break."

The dancing was going on more wildly than before, while the mirth had increased and rose to a hubbub which threatened to drown the music. As Arnold clasped Gertrud for another turn she suddenly freed herself, seized his arm and whispered low:

"Come."

She left him no time to ask whither, but led the way to the door.

"Where are you going, Trudchen?" some of her friends called after her.

"I'll be back directly," was the short answer, and a moment later she stood with Arnold out in the fresh evening air.

"But where are you going, Gertrud?"

"Come," was her only reply, and she led him on by the broad



highway until they passed the outer walls of the village. Then she turned to the left and ascended a low hill, from which the lights of the tavern could be plainly seen. Here she stood still, gave Arnold her hand, and said earnestly :

“ Give your mother my heart’s greeting. Farewell.”

“ Gertrud,” cried Arnold, amazed and confused ; “ you will not send me from you like this in the middle of the night. Have I offended you in any way ? ”

“ No, Arnold,” said the girl, calling him for the first time by his name ; “ it is because—because I like you that I send you away.”

“ But I will not let you go back to the village in the dark,” pleaded Arnold. “ Child, you don’t know how dear you are to me ; how in these few hours you have taken possession of my heart. You do not know——”

“ Say no more,” interrupted Gertrud quickly. “ We will not say good-bye now. Wait till the clock has struck twelve ; it will only be ten minutes, and then come to the door of the tavern. I will wait for you there.”

“ And meanwhile——”

“ Meanwhile stay here. Promise me that you will step neither to the right nor to the left till the last stroke of twelve has sounded.”

“ I promise it, Gertrud ; and then——”

“ Then you may come,” said the girl ; gave him her hand in farewell, and turned to go.

“ Gertrud,” cried Arnold, beseechingly.

Gertrud stood a moment, then, turning, suddenly flung her arms around his neck, and Arnold felt her ice-cold lips pressed close to his own. But it was only for a moment ; then she freed herself and flew toward the village. Arnold remained where she had left him, bewildered by her strange behavior, yet mindful of his promise.

Meanwhile, a change had taken place in the weather. The wind moaned in the trees, and from the scudding clouds a few large raindrops fell, giving warning of the coming storm. Through the blackness of the night gleamed the lights from the tavern, and, as the wind came in gusts, he could hear broken bursts of the music, but not for long. He had waited only a short time when the old church clock began to strike ; at the same moment the music ceased, or was drowned by the howling wind, which blew so fiercely over the hillock that Arnold bowed before it.

When he rose, the clock had finished striking, the hurricane had passed, but nowhere in the village could he discover a light.

"The time is up," murmured Arnold, "and I must see Gertrud once more. I can't part from her like this. The dance is over. The dancers will be going home now, and if the Schulze will not keep me over night, I'll stay at the tavern; besides, I couldn't find my way through the wood in the darkness."

Cautiously he descended the slope which he had climbed with Gertrud, intending to take the broad highway back into the village, but the ground was soft and marshy, and where he expected to find the road was an alder thicket. In vain he searched with anxious haste; the ground grew softer and marshier the farther he went; the undergrowth became thicker and armed with thorns, which tore his clothing and scratched his hands till the blood ran.

He was afraid of going still farther astray, and stopped on a tolerably dry spot to wait till the old clock should strike one.

But it did not strike; not a dog howled; no human sound reached his ear, and painfully and wearily, wet through and through, shaking with cold, he struggled

back to the higher ground where Gertrud had left him. He made several more vain attempts to penetrate the thicket and find the village, but at last, thoroughly exhausted, he sought a sheltering tree under which to pass the night. Chilled with the frost, he could not sleep, and the hours dragged slowly.

At last the first faint rays of dawn appeared, and he looked eagerly for the brown church-tower and the weather-beaten roofs of Germelshausen. Only a wilderness of bushes, with here and there a crooked willow, met his gaze. Not a road was discernable; not a sign of human habitation was near.

Unable to solve this riddle, Arnold wandered back some distance into the valley. He came at last to the stone where he had sketched Gertrud. He would have known the place among a thousand. And now he knew exactly where he had come from



and where Germelshausen must be, and he walked rapidly down the valley, taking exactly the same direction which he had followed with Gertrud the day before. He also recognized the slope of the valley over which the mist lay; only the alder thicket separated him from the first house of the village.



Now he had reached it! He pressed forward and found himself in the very same bog in which he had waded about all night. The village had vanished!

Wholly puzzled and not trusting his own senses he spent several hours in fruitless search, wandering back and forth until his tired legs refused him further service.

Utterly exhausted he threw himself under a tree, took Gertrud's picture from his portfolio and with deep sadness gazed on the dear face of the girl, realizing, almost with dismay, how strong a hold she had gained upon him.

Suddenly there was a rustling in the foliage behind him, a dog barked, and as Arnold sprang quickly up, he saw an old hunter gazing curiously at him.

"God greet you," cried Arnold, rejoiced to meet a human being, and hastily thrusting the sketch back in his portfolio. "You come most opportunely, friend, for I believe I have lost my way."

"Hm," said the old man. "If you have lain here in the bushes the whole night, only half an hour's walk from the good tavern at Dillstedt, I believe you have, indeed. Heavens, how you look! As if you had been up to your ears in thorns and mud."

"You are well acquainted in this forest?" asked Arnold, who above all things wished to know where he really was.

"I should say so," laughed the hunter, as he struck fire and lighted his pipe.

"What is the name of the next village?"

"Dillstedt, just over there. If you go to the top of that little slope you can easily see it lying before you."

"And how far am I from Germelshausen?"

"Where?" cried the hunter in horror, taking his pipe from his mouth.

"Germelshausen."

"Heaven preserve us," said the old man, casting a timorous look about. "I know this wood well enough, but how many

fathoms deep in the earth the accursed village lies, God only knows, and it's nothing to us."

"The *accursed* village," cried Arnold in surprise.

"Germelshausen,—yes," said the hunter. "Just there, in the marsh, where the old willows and alders now grow, the village must have stood many, many hundred years ago. Then it sank out of sight, no one knows why or where, and the story goes that every hundred years on a certain day it comes to light again; but no mortal man would want to happen there at the time. But your night's lodging in the bushes doesn't seem to have agreed with you. You're as white as a sheet. Here, just take a drink out of this flask; it will do you good."

"Thanks."

"Now you had better go over to the tavern and find a warm bed."

"In Dillstedt?"

"Why, yes—of course. There is no other near."

"And Germelshausen?"

"Be so kind as not to mention that place again just here. Let the dead rest, and especially those who have no rest at all."

"But the village was here yesterday," cried the young man, hardly able to control his voice. "I was there; I ate there, drank there, danced there."

The hunter quietly examined the young man from head to foot, then said with a laugh:

"But it had another name, didn't it? Probably you have just come from Dillstedt. There was a dance there last night, and the strong beer which the host brews was perhaps too much for you."

Instead of replying, Arnold opened his portfolio, took out the sketch which he had made from the church-yard and asked:

"Do you know that village?"

"No," said the hunter, shaking his head; "there is no such low tower anywhere about here."

"That is Germelshausen," cried Arnold. "And do your peasant girls in the neighborhood wear the costume of this girl here?"

"Hm, no; and what a strange funeral procession you have there."

Arnold made no reply; he thrust the papers back again into

his portfolio, and a strange feeling of wretchedness came over him.

"You can't mistake the road to Dillstedt," said the hunter, kindly, for a dim suspicion came to him that the stranger might not be just right in his mind; "but, if you wish, I will go with you till we come in sight of the village."

"Thank you, no," said Arnold. "I shall get there all right. So the village only rises once in a hundred years?"

"So they say," said the hunter; "who knows whether it is so?"

"God be with you," said Arnold, offering the hunter his hand.

"Thanks," replied the man. "Where are you going now?"

"To Dillstedt."

"That's right. Just over the slope there, you will find the broad highway."

Arnold turned and walked slowly along the path. But when he reached the elevation from which he could see the whole valley, he stopped a moment and looked back.

"Farewell, Gertrud," he murmured low, and as he walked forward down the slope, tears filled his eyes.



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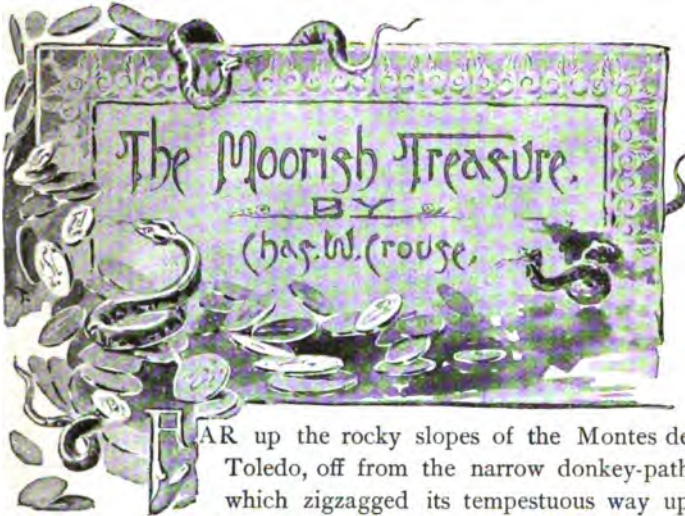
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# SHORT STORIES

A MAGAZINE OF FACT AND FICTION

Vol. XVI. No. 3. *This magazine is planned to cover the story-telling field of the world. Its selections will be of the best procurable in all the languages.* JULY, 1894



CLIMB up the rocky slopes of the Montes de Toledo, off from the narrow donkey-path which zigzagged its tempestuous way up the mountain-side, stood a solitary hut. It was a rudely constructed, one-roomed affair, with a roof of dirt and stones. Its red clay walls were hardly distinguishable from the surrounding soil to the infrequent traveller who, astride his burro, laboriously climbed the rough road, belaboring his poor beast and piously cursing his luck; or, perhaps, in the steeper places where he was forced to walk, holding fast to the tail of his luckless animal, determined to make it under any circumstances bear the bulk of the burden.

To render its isolation more complete, a hedge of aloes had been grown on the side nearest the trail. On the other side lay a small piece of tilled ground, and in a shallow furrow stood a plow, like the primitive one of Adam of old—the crotch of a tree; it was rudely shod, however, with iron. A small burro browsed beneath a clump of cypress trees in the rear.

Within the bowl-like room of the hut, upon a rude mattress, lay an aged peasant. His hollow cheeks and emaciated form told a story of sickness and suffering, and the white, apathetic face and lustreless eyes showed it was a sickness unto death.

\* The writer of this tale has been awarded the prize for the best story of adventure and discovery of hidden treasure. Illustrations by George T. Tobin.—Copyrighted.

Manuel Méndez realized his end was near, and like many another sin-burdened mortal has done, was easing his final hours by a confession of his deeds and misdeeds to a fellow-man. It was, however, more than the mere relief that comes from imparting burdensome secrets which he sought when he told the young



man, who sat upon a low-backed stool beside his bed, the story of his life. Gratitude to his youthful benefactor filled the old man's heart.

An itinerant musician, whose entire worldly possessions consisted of a guitar—which he loved better than his soul—and the clothes upon his back, Juan Tejera had in his wanderings come upon the peasant while lying ill, and out of goodness of heart

had remained with and taken care of him. It was to repay this labor of compassion that Manuel taxed the strength of his last moments.

"Brother of my soul," he said tenderly, "thou hast been kind to me when I had almost forgotten that man knew of kindness, so long had it been unseen by me; and befriended me when I was deserted by all others; and in recompense, thou shalt know of a treasure greater than thou hast ever dreamed of. It will make thee richer than all men. And the wealth shall be justly thine, for its owners are long since dead, and dead men have no use for gold." He paused a moment to collect his waning strength; the young man was bending eagerly forward. Down in the valleys below them the silent forces of darkness were gathering and slowly creeping up the mountain-side. As if he felt the silent forces of death were also gathering, and was fearful lest they should overtake him with his narrative unfinished, the old man hastened on with it.

"In my younger days I was noted for my skill as a stone worker, and it once happened I was brought, with a fellow workman, to the suburb of Albaycin, to repair the fountain in the patio of the palace of the Gypsy king. The trouble, we found, was at the bottom of the basin. The water was drawn off, and we had descended to make the necessary repairs. While thus engaged I discovered and called the attention of my companion to a hole at the top of the basin. It was large enough to easily admit a man, and we saw that the overhanging, fancifully carved, marble rim of the basin alike protected it from the observation of any one in the patio above, and from the water in the basin below.

"The palace had been built centuries before by the Moors, and we judged we had discovered the entrance to one of those subterranean passages which are so frequently found beneath their houses. Curious to know more about it, we procured candles and started to investigate. We found, as we had expected, a steep tunnel-like passage, down whose slippery stone floor, greased with the dampness and mould of ages, we slid with an alarming rapidity to a somewhat larger, but level, passage. Once down, the question of how to return immediately presented itself. The descent had been remarkably easy, but to slide up was another matter. Finding we were unable to arrive at any solution of the problem, we concluded to investigate further in the hope of discovering another outlet. We proceeded

along the passage cautiously, stooping low to avoid striking our heads against the rocky roof, and holding our candles before us.

"We walked thus a hundred yards, perhaps, when suddenly we came into a sort of vault, and there—ah! how plainly, I can see it yet—Dias! what a sight it was to men who knew well the pinchings of poverty. Gold! gold! gold! There in one glittering heap was more than we could earn in a thousand years of toil. We capered like children about the vault, hugged each other with frenzied joy, and crazily talked plans for spending our wealth.

"Then came a change. A greed possessed me. Why should I share these riches with another? I asked myself. What right



had Ricardo Gonzalez to the gold which I had discovered? Mine it was, and mine it should be. Like all Spaniards, I carried a knife in the folds of my woolen sash—already I saw a stiletto in Ricardo's hand—but too late—I struck him—first."

The speaker had half risen upon his elbow in the excitement of his recollections, but now stopped and fell back. A moment

later, when Juan touched his brow, it was already cold. Death had come with the darkness, which now mantled the mountain-tops, and lowered the curtain upon an ended life.

Juan arose and passed out of the hut. He was greatly agitated by the strange story he had just listened to. Wild hopes were created by it, and a life of new expectations and new objects was opened before him. He, the strolling beggar, who most of the time was in doubt as to the source of his next meal, having expectations of wealth! How unreal it seemed. Yet he could already see himself bearing the gold upon his shoulders from the vault; setting up a princely establishment at Madrid—yes, at Madrid it should be, that home of the luxury-loving—and Carlóta. Carlóta! He repeated the name with ecstasy. Even now he could see the oval face, the soft lustrous eyes, the round, white neck. Was there ever another so fair? An hour since, he had scarcely dared breathe her name, so far had she seemed above him; but now he even dared hope to win the proud señorita with all her beauty and position. With wealth all things were possible. In the midst of these rapturous dreamings came the alarming thought that perhaps there were important details of the untimely-ended story yet untold. Manuel may have removed it to another hiding-place, or others, perhaps, had found and appropriated it. But the old careless spirit which had often before comforted him under adverse circumstances, again asserted itself, and forbade his "meeting trouble half way."

He was still, however, unable to entirely dismiss his fears, for when he lay down under the stars,—he could not bring himself to share the hut with its silent occupant—he dreamed he sought the treasure, but found in its place the bewitching and mocking face of Carlóta, who continually eluded him as he pursued her, until old Manuel, in a suit of gold coin, laid on like fish-scales, came and bore her further and further from him.



In the morning Juan dug a grave beneath the cypress trees and buried Manuel. Above the little mound of upturned earth he erected a rude wooden cross, and piled stones about its base to secure it. This last service done, he invested himself with the authority of an administrator, assumed the rights of a sole legatee, and began at once to settle up the estate in a simple and satisfactory manner. From an arbor, which had been used as a sort of an open-air store-room, he brought great bunches of fragrant Malaga grapes, melons cased with straw, and vegetables of various kinds, all of which he packed in the enormous pockets of the donkey's pannier, until the little brown burro was almost hidden from sight beneath the load. In his own pannier, the *alfórrja*, or peasant's bag, which he wore slung over his shoulder, he placed those articles so indispensable to the travelling Spaniard, even though his journey be but of an hour's duration—the garlic pot and wine-skin. Thus equipped, he abandoned the little farm and set off down the mountain to the distant town of Toledo.

Where the donkey-path joined the main highway he came up with a farmer, who, in his great hooded two-wheeled cart, which looked from a distance as it went nodding along behind its tandem team of burros like a monstrous old woman's bonnet, was also bound for the market, and they travelled in company the remainder of the journey. Together they crossed the long bridge leading into the city, and jointly argued with the burly revenue official at the towered gate—a dog of a man, who tumbled out every cabbage and carrot in his search for smuggled goods in spite of their pious and tearful protestations of innocence.

At the market-place Juan laid his long woolen cloak upon the ground, rolling a rim, and upon his huge plate exposed his fruits and vegetables for sale. Late in the afternoon the red flannel lining of the cloak was cleared and upon its owner's back again, while the equivalent of its former load jingled musically in his pocket. He was now ready for his journey in search of the hidden treasure.

He had learned much regarding his route and destination, during the day, from a *caballero* of the noble profession of beggary, who, motionless as a statue, had been standing near him, with his hand extended in supplication to the passers-by. Prominently displayed upon the beggar's ragged cloak, along with the brass license badge of the government, hung a crest which proclaimed him to be the proud descendant of an old grandee fam-

ily. Despite his illustrious lineage and his absurd airs of superiority on that account, he proved himself a sociable and obliging fellow, especially after having been made approachable through the medium of the wine-skin, from which he drank by dexterously shooting a stream into his mouth while holding the skin at full arm's length.

Juan eagerly devoured all the beggar told him ; it was all grist to his mill, and even though some of the information did confuse him and add new difficulties to those he already saw, it did not discourage him. His project was one for which he could form no plans, but must feel his way darkly, step by step. He could only observe and learn, and be freely and constantly dependent upon the inspiration of the next moment. His determination, however, inspired a confidence in himself. He had learned, among other things, that the Gypsy king was considered the best guitar-player in Spain. This was important, for if Juan could do one thing well, it was play upon the guitar.

A long hillside, literally honeycombed with the caves of the gitanos, and dotted here and there with the dilapidated remains of an old Moorish house ; irregular, tortuous streets, filled to overflowing with an ever-shifting mass of humanity ; the weirdest and most filthy beggars, the loudest and most importunate tradesmen, the laziest and most dilatory workmen manufacturing rude plates and articles of iron and leather, the ugliest and dirtiest brown women sewing and weaving cloth, all carrying on their occupations in the streets, and children, dogs, and squalor everywhere ; such Juan found the Gypsy Quarter and its people to be. The whole place, with its teeming population and its underground homes, reminded him of a vast colony of gigantic ants, although he thought they might emulate the industrious habits of that insect with profit to themselves. However, that was their affair, and his present business was not with the common people, but with their king.

For a week he had been in this miserable place, living among the people, keeping his eyes and ears open, and seeking an opportunity to get within the king's palace. He had thought of many plans for effecting this, but rejected them all upon consideration as unpractical. He even thought seriously at one time of tunneling under the walls, and explored the ground about the palace with that object, but was unable to find a spot sufficiently secluded for his operations.

His chief amusement during this time had been playing the guitar. Your true Spaniard is always powerless to resist the attractions of his favorite instrument and will, at any and all times, postpone a journey, put off a duty or stop work—especially stop work—at the first twang of the strings. The children seem born with a knowledge of and love for the national *fandango* dance, so early do they acquire it. Juan's fame as a guitarist had soon spread among the Gypsies and wherever he went he was quickly surrounded by a crowd of brown loafers who, with handclappings and exclamations, encouraged the younger ones as they danced the exciting *fandango*. His fame had even penetrated to royal ears, and it was in answer to a summons from the palace that he was now on his way thither.

The imperial residence had at one time been a stately structure, rich with ornamentation and architectural beauty and a pride to its Moorish builders; but time and man had, through successive years, despoiled its beauty until it now appeared, upon the outside, little more than a group of graceful columns and a reddish stone wall supporting a roof of earth, stones and rubbish. Inside the small spike-studded door, however, more traces of the old-time beauty appeared. Floors inlaid with red and blue tiles arranged in pleasing mosaics; walls adorned with graceful and ingenious arabesques; doorways with the superb horse-shoe arch above them and with borders of stone colored differently from the walls and inscribed in letters of azure, crimson and gold with the religious precepts of the Arabs. But even in the most beautiful parts Juan found dirt and squalor to prevail, and fowls roosted on the handsomely carved ornamentations.

He was received by the king in the patio. It may be easily imagined that he regarded with much interest the fountain which played in the centre with a soft murmur, serenely unconscious of the secret which it guarded beneath its rippling waters. Unversed in kings, he had expected a certain amount of ceremony would be connected with his reception, but he was unprepared for the democratic freedom which characterized the court of this Gypsy ruler, if the three or four out-at-elbow hangers-on who loafed about the patio could be called by so dignified a name. Their time seemed taken up with their cigarettes, wine-skins and garlic pots to the exclusion of any mere matters of state.

When Juan presented himself, the king said simply: "I have heard from many sources thou canst play upon the guitar with



excellence. I have sent for thee, for if thou art as skillful in thy performance as I have heard of thee, thou canst be of service to me. Let me hear thee play."

Presently, as Juan played, there came through a doorway at the end of the patio the five daughters of the king in gayly-colored dresses, with castanets and tambourines, pirouetting and



dancing. There was an incessant clapping of hands and clatter of castanets and rattling of tambourines and stamping of heels upon the tiled floor, accompanied by a low, mournful wail and an agonized twisting and swaying of their bodies as they danced their wild, weird dance.

Among the dancers was one tall, dark woman—Benita he afterward learned her name to be—who often swept close to him, flashing a daring look from her black eyes over her shoulder

as she passed. To this language of the eye he was not slow to respond in kind. To himself he excused this little faithlessness to Carlóta on the ground that it was but a means unto an end—an end with Carlóta—and meant nothing. He was of necessity bound to accept every opportunity that offered itself to ingratiate himself in the royal household, he reasoned, for to strengthen himself here was to strengthen his chances of obtaining the treasure, and to obtain that was to obtain Carlóta. Looking at it in this light he felt quite virtuous. The dancers filed out, Benita venturing a last look as she disappeared, and he ceased playing.

“Caramba!” exclaimed the king, “my people have spoken truly; thou dost play well, indeed. To-morrow my daughters dance in Granada for the pleasure of a party of English travellers, and thou shalt again play for them.”

Juan had to be careful lest he betrayed too great an eagerness in expressing his pleasure at such an arrangement. The first, and what he thought to be the hardest, step was now accomplished. He was installed upon a certain footing at the entrance to the hiding-place of the Moorish treasure, and he was not the man he thought himself to be if he did not soon possess it. That night he remained within the palace walls.

He determined to make his first attempt that very night. He could see nothing to be gained by waiting—indeed, the night seemed especially favorable for his project. A thunder-storm was noisily rolling and rumbling up in the mountains, and a strong wind was rising. This would aid him by drowning any accidental noise, and his impatience made him think lightly of ordinary risks. Once with the gold actually in his possession, he would snap his fingers at this patronizing king of a race of beggars, build a palace that would put his dilapidated old pile to disgrace, and kick any itinerant musician out of doors who presumed to call him brother.

As soon as the quietness about the palace assured him that its inmates had all retired, he stole out into the patio. He had long ago provided himself with candles and matches and a coil of light rope, with a hook fastened in one end, in anticipation of this occasion. He shut the water off from the fountain and watched it sink in the basin until the marble bottom was exposed. Then, leaping down, eagerly felt in the darkness under the rim for the opening. It was an anxious moment. Ah! it was there.

Profiting by the experience of the first explorers, he fastened

his hook over the edge of the hole, boldly climbed in, uncoiled his rope, and hand over hand let himself down the steep incline. The place smelled damp and disagreeable. The darkness was so intense he could almost feel it. At the bottom he lighted his candle, and carefully groped his way along the rocky gallery which he found. His heart beat fast now with hope and expectation, for every moment he expected to come upon the vault. But he was not to win the legacy of the ancient Moslems thus easily. He walked for what seemed to him a long way without coming to the end of the gallery. The damp rocks about him glistened in the flickering light of his candle, and an occasional bat, frightened by this unwonted visitor, startled him as it darted from some crevice.

Suddenly he heard a quick, angry hissing. At the same moment he saw a large snake coiled upon the stones before him. Under ordinary circumstances Juan was not lacking in physical courage, in fact, he prided himself upon his fearlessness, but when he counted, rising in rapid succession about him, one, two, three, four, five hissing and venomous heads, fear drove all thoughts of further search for the treasure from his mind and his only concern was for his safety. Already he saw one of the reptiles writhing toward him. He turned and ran. A stone tripped and threw him violently, extinguishing his candle. Now utterly panic-stricken with terror, he arose and dashed forward in the darkness, nor did he slacken his speed until he reached the end of the gallery. There he felt about for his rope. To his surprise he could not find it, but in its place a ladder which felt like iron, and seemed to mount a perpendicular shaft. He concluded that, in his flight, he must have turned into a side passage which led into another outlet. Going back was not to be considered for an instant—he shuddered when he thought of what was behind him—so he grasped the rusty rounds and started upward.

When he had climbed some distance he felt one of the rounds yield slightly as he stepped upon it, and a draught of cold, damp air revealed an opening beside him. Outside he heard the noise of the storm, mingled with the voices of men talking excitedly. As he stepped through the aperture a stone moved up behind him and noiselessly closed it. He found himself upon a gallery overlooking the patio. The storm was now raging violently and the rain falling fast.

To his alarm he saw that many of the household were moving about the patio with lights. He wondered, anxiously, if they had

discovered the empty fountain, and if they were searching for him. A woman was running along the balcony toward him. By the light of the hissing and sputtering torches below he saw it was Benita, and he caught her as she came up.

"What has happened?" he asked at a venture.

She clung to him affrightedly, and looked pale and scared.

"I do not know; I heard an awful crash," she said.

Her answer was reassuring to Juan: at least he was not the cause of the trouble.

At one end of the balcony one of the curtains—which ran on wires from one side of the palace to the other and served as a roof to screen the patio when the sunshine became too fierce—was not fully drawn, and offered a protection from the storm. He drew her beneath this shelter. There they learned from the conversation of the men below the crash had been caused by the falling of an already dilapidated outside wall, which the wind had blown down.

The alarm ended, Juan drew his companion further into the shadow and tried to quiet her fears, for she still trembled with excitement.

The household had again settled down into quietness, and the storm abated before he crossed the patio on the way to his room, and turned the water again into the fountain. Above him, standing in a doorway, her tall, graceful figure in silhouette against the light of the room behind her, he could see Benita waving a kiss into the darkness to him.

His hopes had receded far in the past two hours, but he had at least strengthened his position, for he knew that Benita loved him.

Back of the palace, upon the hillside, a dismantled watch-tower reared its dilapidated head, a mute reminder of the scenes of strife and bloodshed which the surrounding hills and valleys had witnessed. There, centuries before, the Moslem warrior had watched for his Christian enemy.

Upon a low stone seat at the entrance of the tower, Juan and Benita sat one afternoon, about a week after his unsuccessful attempt to find the secreted gold. Below them lay the swarming Gypsy town, and further down, the beautiful green plain of Vega, dotted here and there with little white houses, like pearls set in emerald, and bounded by the gleaming river Xenil.

In the past week Juan had made much progress in his love

affair with Benita, but little toward the object of his travels, in fact, was further from it now than he had been at any time since his arrival. That very day he had been turned from the palace by the king, who had discovered the love of his daughter. A musical adventurer was all very well in his sphere, but, in the opinion of the Gypsy ruler, his sphere was not that of his daughter's suitor. The daughter, however, thought differently, and while the father in his palace below indulged in his afternoon siesta, she and her lover planned an elopement. Not that Juan had given up hope of finding the treasure, and was going to leave it. His one object was still to possess it. But he knew his only hope of regaining an entrance to the palace was as Benita's husband; therefore, he desired to marry her.



As they talked, he idly picked up a stone, and tossed it into a cavity which had been disclosed by a part of the tower wall falling away. He was surprised to hear sounds as if the stone were falling a considerable distance. Benita also noticed it, and said: "There is a tradition that this tower is connected with the palace by an underground passage, but no one has ever been able to discover it."

This was enough to excite Juan, and in a moment he had entered the cavity, and, candle in hand, was descending the steep passage which he found, closely followed by the astonished Benita. Unlike the other gallery he had been into, this one was perfectly dry, and soon became high enough to allow them to walk but slightly stooped. They went down, down, until they felt sure they must be under the palace. Suddenly Benita clutched his arm. In the dust beneath them were footprints, and then, a few feet further on, they came upon the white bones of a skeleton. The sight filled Juan with a wild delight. "I have found it; I have found it," he cried, hurrying forward, dragging his companion after him, at the imminent risk of breaking both their heads.

In a moment the passage widened into a circular room. There, as the dying peasant had told, lay the golden treasure of

the Moors. Benita sank upon her knees and piously crossed herself. Juan touched it: first, as if it were something to be feared, then ecstatically gloated over it, running his hands through the pile of shining, jingling pieces, fondling them and murmuring, "Mine! mine at last!"

Taking Benita's shawl from her shoulders, they piled the gold upon it and gathered the four corners together. It made a load so heavy he could scarcely carry it alone. Between them they carried it up to the watch-tower. There he said to her softly, "At midnight, my beloved, meet me here, and to-morrow we shall be one in name and soul."

He waited until darkness began to gather and then, as the stars were taking their places one by one in the clear sky above him, he fled—alone.

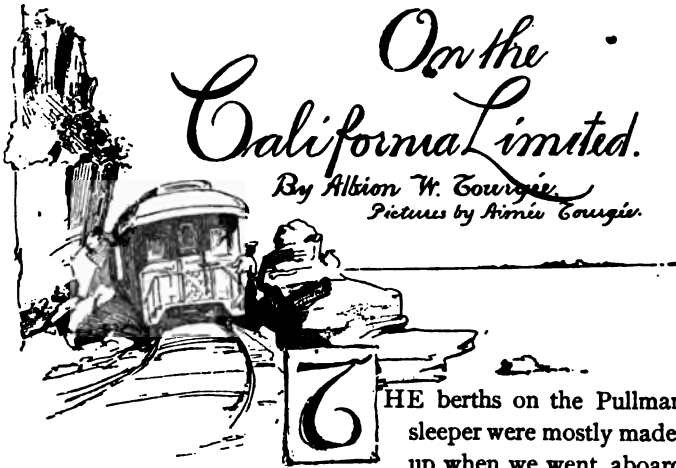
A cavalier was serenading his señorita beneath her cross-barred and balconied window. The music was Juan's, but the player was hardly recognizable in the broad-brimmed silky beaver, the fine broadcloth cloak with its crimson velvet lining, and the slashed trousers which he wore.

The señorita had come out upon the balcony to answer his song with one of her own as sweet as his. At last his dream was realized. The low music filled him with rapture, for it was Carlóta's song he heard.

Suddenly a tall, dark figure confronted him—a knife-blade gleamed an instant in the moonlight.

"Mother of God! Benita! Have mercy!" But once—twice—the long blade is quickly buried in his breast, and the swooning señorita above, sees only the ghastly face of her cavalier fixed in death.





THE berths on the Pullman sleeper were mostly made-up when we went aboard at Chicago, so there was hardly time to inspect our fellow-travellers, much less make their acquaintance, until the next morning. Then the conductor came through calling out the address of a telegram he had received, from which we all learned the identity of one of our fellow-passengers, a man of some distinction on the lecture platform.

"Well," said the Lecturer, as we steamed out of Kansas City and took our way up the Kaw in the teeth of one of those tearing winds which seem to come out of the nozzle of a bellows, so steadily do they blow off the great plain beyond, with no apparent cause and with no visible effort, "I think we shall have a pleasant trip."

One after another of the occupants of the smoking compartment glanced out of the window as if to investigate the conditions on which the prediction rested. The morning was bright; the Kaw full of hurrying water, that sparkled in the sun and rippled with the wind. The willows and cottonwoods along its banks were showing a hint of spring in the red and yellow of the yet unbudded twigs. The farmers were turning up the rich black soil, the crows and grackles following in the furrows, and the cattle, gaunt and rough-coated with the winter's confinement, snuffed the keen wind as if it brought a hint of fresh-springing pastures.

"Oh, I don't mean that," continued the Lecturer, with a smile. "So far as the scenery or the weather is concerned, unless we get snowed up on the Raton, it makes precious little difference about the time of the year on this route. There is a little inter-

val, after the rawness of the spring is over and before the heat of the summer comes on, while the cottonwoods have still their vernal freshness, the prairies a hint of bluish green in the distance, while the blossoming cacti light up the foreground, when there is a peculiar, tender, nameless charm about the landscape across the plains. Aside from that, it is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.' Verdure and arborescence form so slight an element of the outlook that, so far as the season is concerned, after we pass Middle Kansas, it makes small difference when one comes or goes. It was the contents of the car I referred to—the internal not the external prospect."

"You think that favorable to a pleasant trip?" asked a young collegian. "It seems to me a deucedly dull outfit. Why, I haven't found a single person I know on the train."

"Considering the fact that you probably do not know, even casually, more than a thousand people, that is not so very strange," the Lecturer rejoined. "Yet it is the key of my prediction. We have a carload of thirty-three people—every berth taken except two uppers—who are going to be together long enough to find out all that is pleasant in each other, and not long enough to bring out our disagreeable qualities. From a hasty glance, I judge that they are all intelligent, in fairly good health, coming from different localities, mostly young and middle-aged, and nearly all strangers to each other. I doubt if any one knows more than two of his travelling companions, while the most of us know none of them—counting, of course, a man and his wife as one."

"And is that your idea of a pleasant company?" asked a young married man, whom we learned afterward to be a college professor, who was going to a new field of duty on the Pacific slope.

"Certainly; we shall have the pleasure of getting acquainted without any fear of consequences and no responsibility for the future. That is the advantage we Americans have over all other peoples—no one is too high or too low to be known as a companion when we are thus thrown together. We realize that freemasonry which enables all to 'meet upon the level and part upon the square.' To have a pleasant company for a long journey, people should not be too well acquainted with each other."

These remarks had broken the ice. Before the day was over, everybody on the car knew everybody else. At La Junta the



two vacant berths were taken by passengers from the Denver train. The day following the acquaintanceship had ripened into genuine pleasure-making. Jest went round, stories were told, and the whole car seemed like one big family. If at any time one's company grew a little dull, he had only to change his seat to get other. In all my experience I have never seen so pleasant a party; yet I doubt if they would have been specially agreeable as old acquaintances.

It was on the evening of the third day that I started in company with the Lecturer for the dining-car. Such a car had been found waiting for us in the desert solitude, lighted, provisioned, with white-capped waiters and courteous conductor. Whence it came, or where it left us, I know not. It was there at evening, and not there in the morning. The waste which gave it forth, had swallowed it up. When we reached the door of the car, I opened it and waved my companion to go first, a courtesy due to his years.

"No, thank you," said he; "I never cross from one car to another without shutting the door of the car behind me before I start."

"Why not?" I asked.

"No matter," he replied, with a light laugh. "You go ahead, and I will hold the door open until you get across. We shall get no dinner if you wait for me to venture first."

I did as he directed, wondering somewhat at his words. The train was dropping down the grade just beyond Flagstaff, rushing through the darkness with the dull, monotonous roar which comes to so oppress the ear of the traveller through those silent spaces which lie between the eastern and the western life of the continent, and seem the haunted galleries of a dead world. There did not appear to be much wind, but a gust beat sharply on my face as I opened the door, and the rush of the wheels and their crunching against the rails, first on one side and then on the other, seemed somehow to be connected with the sting of fine particles of sand on my cheeks. I do not suppose it was, beyond the mere fact, at least, that the train was making up time on a down-grade against a wind that was doing a brisk business in real estate, as the wind usually does in those regions.

The brakeman of the car in front was looking out of the door. The glare of the lamps fell on the railings and I saw the ratchet of the unused hand-brake bounding back and forth as if anxious to contribute something to that strange medley of sound which

makes up what we term the "roar" of a railway train. I knew from the sulphurous smell that the air-brakes were pressed close home and that we were executing one of those daily miracles when one man's hand saves a thousand lives from apparently inevitable doom. I never have so high an opinion of modern science as when I see it holding, steady and secure, a train weighing hundreds of tons while it pitches along a down-grade seemingly bent on self-destruction.

When I had reached the other car I turned and looked back at the Lecturer. Something in his tone, rather than the words he used, had given me a curious sensation as I crossed the wind-swept interval between the cars, and I looked back with some interest to see if I could detect in his movements any key to their significance.

He was of rather solid build, with a somewhat dragging step, and, though robust enough in appearance, leaned heavily on a cane. When I had crossed he buttoned his coat a little closer, shifted his cane into his left hand, put up his right to see that the skullcap he wore was securely in place, opened the door, and, holding with his right hand to the outer knob, stretched forth his left and seized the railing of the car, then, closing the door, he crossed the intervening space slowly and carefully, never quitting his hold with one hand until he had secured a firm grip with the other. I stretched out my hand to assist him, but noticed that

he did not loose his close clasp of the railing until he was well within the door of the forward car.

A moment after, we were seated in the brightly illuminated dining-car, whose immaculate appointments and sparkling ware made a pleasing contrast with the impenetrable darkness upon our left, as well as with the



dull gray of the riven cliff upon our right. From the surging of the car we knew that the road was full of sharp curves

and that the train was winding down a track cut out of the face of a sheer cliff, but with the callousness of veteran travellers we gave it hardly a thought. At least, I did not. After a waiter had taken our orders and we had unfolded our napkins and sipped the iced Manitou water he set before us, I noticed that my companion had grown serious and his eyes followed the rocky wall upon our right with a peculiar steadiness not usual with him.

"If it is not impertinent," I said after a time, "I would like to ask if you have any particular reason for the peculiar rule you have adopted in crossing from one car to another?"

"Is it peculiar?" he asked.

"I don't know," I answered, "perhaps not. For aught I know every other man on the train may do the same thing, but I never noticed it and never heard one speak of it before."

"No," my companion said with a laugh, "I do not think it is usual. So far as I know I am the only man who acts on that rule, and I do not remember to have mentioned it to any other person, though it has been a good many years since I adopted it. Indeed, I am almost sorry to have spoken of it at all."

He looked out of the window at the cleft rocks which kept rushing by, and I said, more to break in upon his reverie than with any expectation that he would offer an explanation:

"If there is anything unpleasant connected with the subject—why—of course——"

He removed his eyes from the wall of splintered rock and fixed them on my face with a seriousness of gaze that checked my words.

Apparently without noticing either my words or my embarrassment, he took up his fork and began to make lines with it upon the fresh-laundered napery.

"No," he said after a time, "I do not know that there is anything especially unpleasant about it, beyond the fact that a man dislikes to refer to aught that shows his own stupidity or confess himself to have been overwhelmed with fright when there was nothing to fear."

I smiled as I remarked that I could not imagine such a thing to be true of him, for not only was it inconsistent with the impression he had made upon me, but I was aware that my companion had a record for personal courage which more than one scar avouched.

"No?" he said inquiringly. "I suppose one would hardly expect such weakness from me, yet I tell you the simple truth when I say that the incident which caused me to adopt this rule, occasioned an access of such abject terror, when there was not the least possible danger, that the sweat burst out upon my face, my limbs trembled, my teeth chattered, and but for the thoughtfulness of my wife, who put a glass of wine to my lips, I think I should have fainted dead away. Which fact reminds me that some of these California Sauternes are of peculiar delicacy: suppose we have a bottle with our soup. Possibly, if our dinner is not too bad, I may feel cheerful enough afterwards to gratify your curiosity."

An hour later we were all gathered in the smoking compartment of our car, the Lecturer in the low, broad wicker chair, which was accorded him by common consent, the others, some standing and some sitting, filled the small room, while the porter squatted on his stool outside the door.

"Well," said the Lecturer, examining his unlighted cigar, for his smoke was always a "dry" one, "there is not much of a story to be told; only a little incident which, though not exactly pleasant for me to recall, is hardly worth the dignity of recital to others.

"A number of years ago, I started late in the season for a lecture-trip on the Coast. It was the fashion then for lecturers to 'do the Coast,' and fabulous stories were told of golden results of such ventures. I had had many 'calls' from that region, and one 'Bureau' after another had made propositions, more or less vague, for such a trip. Somehow, I was not fully satisfied either of the profitable character of the enterprise, or the terms that were offered. The truth is, there is an element of delightful uncertainty about it, which makes the business of the lecturer almost as exciting as that of the gambler. He starts out to go, he knows not where; meets orders on the road to branch off here and there; gives towns the 'go by' at which he had expected to stop, and stops at towns he had never heard of; is to-day expected to stand forth as the champion of some important principle, and to-morrow required to say nothing in a most attractive manner, and especially not to make too plain allusion to the pet infirmities of a community whose infirmities are perhaps so well known that silence in regard to them would be a more suspicious thing than denunciation. To-day you travel by car, to-morrow by stage. One town wishes to change

the date for one reason, another for another. In each, the local reporter desires some incident of your life for publication never before committed to type. Children of all sizes, from ten to a hundred years of age, clamor for your autograph; some want a sentiment, some a poem, some a quotation from one of your works, which you perhaps have not set eyes on in a decade, while some few are kindly content with a bare signature. Of course, travelling every day and speaking every night; deciding all the questions the 'Bureau' takes delight in referring to you; chatting with old friends, defending some fool editor's attack upon something you never said, and could not have said while in your right mind—all these things make it a rapturous delight to find your table at the hotel heaped high with albums, cards, books, and other forms of autographic assault.

"But it is all in a lifetime. So you wobble through your task; make friends with the clerk or the hall-boy, so as to feel secure of being waked in time or not being waked before time; turn in for an hour's sleep and wake to tell a company of strange people something that has grown so old to you that you would rather meet a ghost alone at night, in whatsoever questionable shape it might come. Then you hang about to catch a freight train to a junction twenty miles away; stay there with two bums, a woman, a baby and a red-hot stove for company until two o'clock in the morning, when the operator sticks out his head to tell you the Western Express is eight hours late, the nearest hotel seven miles away, and no other train up or down the line until the Express arrives. You are hungry, tired, sleepy, but can neither eat, sleep nor smoke. You get your breakfast about noon the next day; arrive late at your destination; meet an angry, scowling audience, who think you took a late train just to beat them out of their money. A trip-hammer is working in your brain. You pity your auditors and feel that your lecture must be insufferably dull. The applause seems sardonic in its evident mockery, and when they crowd around you in congratulation at the lecture's close, you think, until the hearty handclasps shake the cobwebs out of your brain, that they are simply poking fun at you. Then you meet an old friend; perhaps two. They were with you at college, or before Atlanta; on the 'March to the Sea,' or in Libby Prison; at this convention or that reception. They give you one grip, and then another. Sometimes you know the grip; sometimes the men; sometimes neither. No matter; they are friends. Your weariness disappears; your troubles are over; your appetite is

restored. You rejoice some late-open restaurant by a demand for food. You are not scrupulous, but take what is to be had—anything from the inevitable stewed oysters to sardines. Perhaps you have a bottle of Bass's ale, or that best of all nerve-restorers, ginger ale; or, lacking both, maybe a glass of hot milk.

"Tame tippie, do you say? Your lecturer is the true temperance man. Whatever he eats or drinks must be with an eye single to to-morrow's bodily or mental condition. If he would avoid dyspepsia, let him never seek his couch with an empty stomach or one filled with unsoothing stimulant. Let him avoid beer as he would poison, and whatever is distilled as a mortal enemy; let him shun, at least at night, tea and coffee as Joabs who promise cheer but carry a sword. It is late when you retire, but you are physically content and at peace with all mankind. You rise late to greet a pleasant day, have a good breakfast, take a convenient train, buy a magazine, and settling yourself to its perusal, sigh with contentment and say in complaisant vain-glorying:

"'Fate cannot harm me; I have dined to-day.'

"You soon learn your mistake. Arriving at your destination, you find no one at the station, though you have telegraphed your train. You hunt up your correspondent. Yes, there are letters for you, he nonchalantly says, but he has left them at home, two miles away across the river. He will bring them at night—if he comes in—that is. Or he will send them to your next appointment. Yes, his wife could get them if you choose to send a messenger. It will take two hours and cost a dollar. Lecture? He doesn't suppose there will be any. He has had a difference with the Bureau. It has been referred to you; but, of course, it is too late to decide it now. Finally, he comes out flat-footed and demands a reduction of fifty per cent. in your fee. You are weak and assent, perhaps only to find that the scamp has sold every seat in his house and has done no advertising because he had no need to advertise. If you are irreligious or short-tempered, you 'use some language,' as the chronicler of Thrums expresses it; while if you are very religious or too good-tempered, you content yourself with wishing you were not, and turn with fresh interest to what the next day will bring forth.

"As I have said, the preparations for this trip were begun late. It was a child born out of due season, if there is any proper season in the lecture business. Coming late, we had to

take what was left, which is seldom the best. I had as a sort of partner in the enterprise a man of pleasant manners, active, bright, and apparently well adapted for the position of either manager or advance agent, two functions which he endeavored to unite in himself. He had not had much, if any, experience in this particular line, but he seemed an ideal combination of the requisite personal qualities, and I had no doubt that he would succeed. He was to have a specific share of the proceeds, after paying a certain portion of the preliminary expenses. Meanwhile, he was allowed a weekly sum out of the receipts over and above his personal expenses. This sum was for the support of his family, and was amply sufficient for that purpose, had there not been other uses to which he deemed it more necessary that it should be applied, of which I had at that time no suspicion.

“The venture seemed doomed to ill-luck from the first. Up to that time I had never known what it was to face a small audience. During the few months previous, illness and misfortune had produced a singularly weak and morbid condition. How I managed to endure the gaze of that first audience, I have never been able to understand. Perhaps I was never nearer suicide than during the night which followed. Everything was wrong; if I had misconceived my audience, it was evident they had quite misunderstood the character and purport of the entertainment I endeavored to give. Unfortunately, its ill-success was not so marked as to cause the immediate abandonment of the trip. Sometimes we made a little, and then again we lost a little more; so that on the whole we were steadily eating into the reserve that had been provided. Seeing this, I determined, unless business greatly improved before we reached the ‘Divide,’ to abandon the enterprise and return home. Fortunately, no positive dates had been fixed on the Coast, and I thought it better to face the loss already incurred than go on making new liabilities. I was weak and sore from recent losses and depressed by ill-health, or I would not unlikely have gone on until there was nothing to be done but to make my way back on my ‘uppers,’ as the theatrical people say. I have an abundance of the quality of holding on, but none of the much rarer gift of letting go at the right time. I had ‘lost my grip’ and was ‘down on my luck’ worse than I had ever been before or expect ever to be again. I am satisfied now that if we had held on we would have met with better ‘business,’ and

probably have had a remunerative trip. But I did not know the 'Coast' then, and distrusted myself.

"Besides that, I was sick, and certain things that came to my knowledge concerning the previous life of my agent, as well as matters connected with his present management, troubled me more than they would at ordinary times. So I decided—much against his wish and protest, I must confess—to turn back. Up to that time I had no grave doubts of his sincerity or integrity. I was merely satisfied of his incapacity, and was sorry for his luck as well as my own; though he had steadily received more than he had earned in the business in which he had previously been engaged, so that it was really no loss to him. I remembered afterwards, that when I decided to take the back-track, he had showed up ugly; but I thought nothing more of it then, than to smilingly guess that he had intended to resolve certain complications which had given him a deal of trouble, whenever we should reach the Coast, whatever our luck might be. If any one had intimated that he had it in his heart to do me an ill-turn, I have no doubt I should have resented it or, at the least, have laughed at it.

"On our way back, we had climbed the Pass after supper at Raton which, by the way, ought to be called Sweetwater. Between the Missouri and the Pacific there is hardly anything so welcome to the weary traveller as the splash of water which unexpectedly greets him at this station. It matters not which way he comes, the alkali dust has gathered in his mustache, cracked his hands, and made his throat hot and raucous, as if it were the crater of a volcano. Slowing up to the station, he hears the ripple of falling water. He needs not to taste and try to know that it is cool and sweet. There is something in the very sound which tells him that. Where does it come from? What does he care about its source? It is there, and he drinks again and again. The supper at the Station House tastes extremely well on account of these drafts of pure water, which do not produce an alkaline reaction either in the palate or in the stomach. And as we start eastward in the early evening twilight, the drip of the pearly drops is the sweetest of valedictions. It impressed one like an oasis, passed over in the darkness with only a hint of verdure and the nameless perfume of fresh water in the arid nostrils.

"Do you know?" he asked, looking around upon his auditory, "what is the greatest of all the wonders our Western World contains?"



"Give it up," said the young collegian, jauntily. "I never could guess a conundrum."

"Yet I doubt," continued the Lecturer, gravely, paying no heed to the young man's flippancy, "if any one of ordinary sensibility has ever crossed the continent without feeling the strange weirdness of the mighty

arid realm which stretches from the edge of the 'bad lands' in the East, to the poppy-fringed shore of the Pacific. No familiarity ever makes it common. Do what we may, it always impresses one like another world, an old world—a dead world, if you like. You may people it; dot it with cities and towns, and sprinkle it with homes; but they are not the same people that live in the verdant stretches of the East; the cities seem strange and unreal; the 'ranches' are not farms, say what we may; and the men and women who are born and dwell in this region, seem to lack some nameless thing which we expect in them, but do not find; just as the wind that wanders nonchalantly over the immense spaces of this dead world seems to lack something of the refreshment that a breeze which comes over verdant meads and mountains clothed with decidua, is sure to bring."



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"Surely," said the young man, "what the wind lacks in moisture it makes up in sand."

"For that matter so do the people," resumed the Lecturer. "There is no doubt that the quality of the environment greatly affects the character of a people. In just what particular those who live within this arid belt differ from the dwellers in the verdant and umbrageous East, it would be hard to define; that they do differ, every one feels when he comes among them."

"Is not that notion largely imaginary?" asked one of the listeners. "I used to think there was a real difference, but the

better I become acquainted with the West, the less I see in the people to distinguish them from the East."

"That may well be," rejoined the Lecturer. "Familiarity always lessens the apprehension of difference. A room, the fittings of which seem at first incongruous and bizarre, being often visited and associated in one's mind with pleasant companions, becomes at length a pleasant instead of a jarring memory. The same is true of the people of this region. They have certain most agreeable qualities, in the enjoyment of which the visitor who comes often among them, loses sight of the differences he once felt. For this reason the man who is best acquainted with the West is, in some sense, the least able to appreciate its peculiar distinctiveness."

"Do you think a stranger to both regions would notice it?"

"Probably a foreigner not familiar with English life would not. I happen to know, however, that the cultivated Englishman notes the difference between our Eastern and Western life almost as quickly, if not as accurately as we do ourselves. It was my fortune once to make the trip with one of the most distinguished living Englishmen—a close observer, with a worldwide reputation as a scientific thinker. I was greatly amused to hear him exclaim, almost as soon as we had crossed the Missouri into this mystic realm: 'Why, how is this? These are a new people. What do you call them?' From that time on he was never tired of discussing the subject. His conclusions were very complimentary to our Western brethren, too. 'These are the kings,' he would say. 'They have exactly what other Americans lack—an utter absence of self-consciousness. By and by, when the continent is full and the children of you Eastern weaklings are squabbling for breathing-places, the offspring of these larger, coarser-natured children of aridness and silence, hardened by generations of exposure to these conditions, will come down and 'possess the goodly land,' that is, the land where ease has engendered sloth and feebleness. Did you ever think that all the great waves which have overcome the weakness of prosperous civilization, have come from the desert or from high and arid inland plateaux?'"

"I was not at all sure of my friend's hasty deduction, and tried to show him some bad gaps in his reasoning. But what is the use of arguing with a scientist? They talk about being clear-headed, and all that sort of thing. So far as my experience goes, a scientist is best defined as a man with only half a

brain. He is the bloodhound of the human species, who runs with his head so close to the ground that he fails to see the most potent facts an inch away from the line he is following. If he happens to strike the right trail he may run down a big idea; but he is wondrous apt to begin to draw conclusions before he has run his game to earth, which are all the more misleading because of the general notion that science is well-nigh infallible.

“When a man begins to speculate about the laws of human existence—the progress or retrogression of human masses—I always grow doubtful of his conclusions, because Science has never yet been able correctly to read the past or predict the future of a race or people. The trouble is that Science neglects the complex nature of man. It is comparatively easy to predict the future or unravel the past of other animals. There are only material conditions to deal with in such cases. But when you come to consider man, there is not only the question of bread and meat and a higher intelligence to be taken into account, but that most curious of all forces, the moral impulse, which may hold him down at the very time other things would indicate a rise, or lift him up at the very moment when all material conditions would indicate an irresistible downward tendency. There are hosts of such contradictions in history—the story of the Israelites, for instance—but my friend is one of those material philosophers who say that ‘given food, climate, and race, one may safely predicate the quality of a people.’ It is sheer folly. Man is a composite of physical, intellectual and moral elements. Of these, the most important and difficult to trace and explain is the moral; but it is so potent that it will overpower both the others—will bind the brain with the unyielding helmet of Confucianism, or condemn the body to voluntary squalor amid tropic abundance. The man who speculates about men, and leaves out soul and brain, is like him who would foretell the weather without knowledge of winds or seasons.”

“Hear! hear!” exclaimed the Scotchman, while the rest of us applauded in true American fashion, by clapping our hands.

“I beg pardon, gentlemen,” said the Lecturer, in visible confusion. “I had no idea how far I was getting away from my subject.”

“Ye canna’ go too far as lang as ye spake as guid sense as that, mon,” rejoined the old Scotchman, heartily. “I don’t know as Science will ever get to be Sense, though it would seem

the two ought to agree well enow, but if it does, it will be in the way ye've pinte'd out, I dare say."

"Well, I suppose these were the very thoughts that were running in my mind while we climbed the grade above Raton that night, for there is nothing 'puts toys of desperation in the head' like this dead world that stretches all the way between La Junta and San Bernardino."

"Dead world!" exclaimed the lawyer from Denver. "I should say there was a good deal of life in it."

"So there is," said the old Scotchman; "so there is, indeed, but so gathered in spots as more surely to certify the deadness of a' the rest. Ye are quite right, sir, it is a dead warld; I have had the feelin' often mesilf. Yet there may be life in it. Life is a mystery, an' the hush that hangs ower the desert an' mountain, the chill gray hush that makes the eye ache for a glimpse o' verdure or a glint of motion, an' keeps the ear astrain for a sound, the gray veil of primeval silence which stretches over all, to which the very grass an' trees are attuned in chromatic harmony—all these make it seem like a dead warld. It minds me always o' that primeval solitude out o' which the warld's life was born, when the 'earth was without form an' void.' Yet I wouldna be quite sure there was na life in the dull wame. I canna even yet look at the gray, silent mountains, wi' the pines stragglin' oop the sides, like soldiers in a charge when the shot comes hailin' among them, an' one halts an' anither staggers, an' some press on an' some fall back—I can niver see the blue-gray shadows, an' feel the silence, without wonderin' whether the dead may not come to life, or a new life spring out of the mysterious darkness an' overwhelm the warld again. I'm like your freen', sir, in thinkin' maybe there's a when dour possibilities about this 'dead warld.' If the ghaists av fierce passions that have struggled for the goold an' siller they hide, ever find flesh an' blood to shelter them again, or lives grow up here with mammonized souls unsoftened by verdure an' tenderness, I opine that they will indeed play havoc with the feebler life that seeks to foil their will. I'm wi' your freen', sir; I think the fate of the continent sleeps atween the bounds ye have named. The rulers of its destiny are not there to-day; but they may well come thence in some grewsome morrow that we know not of."

"Hear! hear!" exclaimed the Lecturer. "You out-Herod Herod!"

We all burst into one of those shouts of laughter which sweeps

over groups of men when they happen to be in a pleasant mood and the subject of conversation is not so grave as to stir their natures into angry controversy.

"Don't you know the ladies are thinking we are having a good time?" asked one of the younger men of the Scotchman.

"An' ain't we now, a reel sensible palaver, sic as such busybodies as we all are, ought to have noo an' then, jest to keep alive the tradition that we're reasonin' creetur?"

As if in echo of the young man's words, the little group parted at the door, and the fair face of the Professor's wife showed in the narrow space between. Making a pretty *moue* at the cloud of smoke which filled the apartment, its owner said, addressing the Lecturer:

"Your story must be very amusing; I think it real mean that we ladies haven't a chance to hear it, too."

"Oh, this is not the story," answered the Professor. "We had almost forgotten that; Mr. McDougal was unfolding to us the mysteries of creation."

"Not at all, sir," explained the Scotchman, "merely wonderin' whether the eternal miracle of life out of death would again people these solitudes. What think you of it, madam?"

"I—oh—I—well——"

"Stop, Mr. McDougal," interrupted the Lecturer, "don't you see that life is still too rosy with Mrs. Professor to permit her to see the shadows which seem fateful to your gaze? Don't think about his stupid old conundrums, madam."

"Never fear," said the fair young woman, looking doubtfully from one to another. "You men are conundrums enough for us, without trying to guess those you propound to each other."

There was another burst of laughter and the pretty head withdrew with that demure look which showed the owner to be well satisfied that she had said the right thing at the right time.

"Noo gang on wi' the story," said McDougal, quietly.

So the Lecturer resumed:

"We had reached the summit of the pass and were swinging down the course of the old trail, steam shut off and brakes on, when it was proposed that we should go forward to the smoker, the compartment in our car being full. I do not know who made the suggestion; probably I did myself. I like to ride in the smoking-car. Somehow I think one is likelier to meet people there than in any other part of the train—I mean unexpected, out-of-the-common people, who are therefore inter-

esting for a time, though they may soon become tedious. It was dark as Cerebus, save for the light from the windows, as we went forward. I opened the door and started carelessly across the platform for the next car. I was just reaching out my hand, groping for the knob, when some one fell against me. The cars were lurching one way and another, so that one's footing was far from secure. The thought flashed through my mind that my agent had missed his balance and in falling had caught hold of me. I threw out my right hand and fortunately caught the railing of the forward car. I had no farther fear for myself, for I have a strength of arm and force of grip which are unusual. As long as my right hand clutched the iron railing of the car I had no apprehension about falling off. Strangely enough the pressure behind, or at the side rather, seemed to increase, and I felt myself forced down the steps. I dropped my stick and caught the guard-rail with my left hand. In the fall I must have missed the lower step, for I felt myself hanging for an instant by my hands, while the rushing train sped on, surging to one side and the other. I remember thinking that it was a very critical position, though I had no fear of being able to recover from it. The agent seemed, as well as I could make out, to have fallen on his hands and knees upon the platform. He was still clinging to me, however, and seemed unable to recover himself. His weight was the only element of real danger. I tried once or twice to swing up on the step, but could not. I managed, however, to get my right knee on the second step. The strain on my right arm was very severe, and it was merely the instinct of self-preservation that made me loose the rail to which I had clung with the left and catch a grip on the first portion of his clothing that came in my way. Instantly he began to pull upwards. 'Help! help!' he cried. The lift he gave enabled me to get my left foot on the stair, and we rose up almost face to face, as the brakeman and conductor came out and helped us into the car.

"Well, by George!" I said, when I was seated in the smoker. 'That was a close call; I don't think I could have held on much longer!'

"Indeed, the unaccustomed exertion and the strain that my right arm had sustained brought me discreditably near a faint, so that the spirituous restorative, which somehow always makes its prompt appearance when anything happens on a train, was especially welcome when the conductor stuck the tin cup under

my nose and kindly instructed me to drink, as if I had forgotten how.

"When I had gathered up my scattering wits the agent was telling the little company how I had slipped and would have fallen but for his efforts to save me. I knew his tendency to draw the long bow, and did not once imagine that this tale of desperate exertion was anything more, yet I burst into a laugh at the idea, which must have seemed hysterical enough to the others, as I said:

"'I should have been badly off if I had waited for you to save me. If you hadn't tumbled against me I should have been in no danger whatever, and I should have been a gone case, and you too, if it had not been for the grip in that.'

"I stretched forth my right hand, torn, bloody and tremulous with the tremendous strain it had undergone.

"'It all happened so quickly that I have no distinct recollection how it did occur,' he said, apologetically.

"'Well, I have,' I declared, 'a most vivid recollection. I was just about to open the door of the forward car when you tumbled against me, and I clutched the rail. I hung on to that, and you hung on to me. Next time I want to go from one car to another I will see that you go ahead.'

"I had really no suspicion of any malign intent; I was only irritated at what I thought his awkwardness and the boastfulness with which he spoke of his part in the accident. I did not look at him as I said this, but noticed that the conductor eyed him in no friendly way, and thought it very natural that one having such responsibility should resent the carelessness of another.

"'Well,' said my companion, with a laugh, 'I seem to be the only one that has lost anything; I have lost my hat.'

"I was in no mood to see anything funny in this remark, to which I answered, tartly enough, no doubt:

"'It was not your fault that I did not lose my life.'

"'Oh, I had hold of you all the time,' he answered, lightly.

"'So you did,' I rejoined; 'that was what made the danger.'

"I could see that there was a feeling of antipathy against him in the little group, and thought he deserved it for having carelessly exposed me to such peril.

"'You don't mean that,' he said, with a startled air. 'I'm glad things are no worse, and you will be when you get over the excitement. I must go and get my hat.'

"It was his soft travelling 'slouch' that he had lost. He got

up and started back to the other car. I took my cigar-case from my pocket and passed it around. The conductor, who could not smoke while on duty, took one and sat down opposite me, in the seat they had turned over in order to allow me to recline. He told of various thrilling incidents that had happened on trains in his charge. As we neared Trinidad he leaned over, and, lowering his voice, said:

“‘If I were you, I would look out for that fellow,’ nodding his head toward the coach in the rear.

“‘What do you mean?’

“‘Nothing—only if I were you, I would look out for him.’

“‘Why should he do me any harm?’

“‘I’m sure I don’t know—but—well, I don’t believe that was an accident.’

“‘Oh, you are altogether out in regard to that!’ I said, heartily.

“‘I may be,’ he answered, quickly, ‘but I shall feel better if you promise me you will not give him any chance for another. Are you armed?’

“‘No.’

“‘Well—he is.’

“‘How do you know?’

“‘Saw him examining his gun. Have you got one?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘I wish you’d keep it about you the rest of the trip. You know I shall quit you pretty soon, and I don’t feel easy after what has happened.’

“‘All right, conductor,’ I replied. ‘Anything to please you—though the man has no more intention of doing me harm than you have. However, I’ll carry the gun, and he knows I can shoot.’

“‘All the better. Here we are at Santa Fé. Good-by.’

“I went back into our car, pulled out my grip and took from it a new Smith and Wesson revolver, examined the chambers, and threw it into my pocket, remarking that I would step out on the platform while we waited.

“‘Expect to meet Indians?’ my companion asked.

“‘Well, I don’t mean to fall into an ambuscade—if I should,’ I answered, significantly.





"I saw his eyes flash and did not blame him for being angry, for I had no idea that there was any cause for the conductor's suspicion."

The narrator stopped and looked out of the window, as if he had finished his story.

"Well, did anything farther happen on the trip?" asked one of the younger listeners.

"Not a thing," was the reply. "We travelled home together, without any allusion to the incident, beyond what was made necessary by the swollen and painful condition of the strained arm. Of course, I kept my eye on him, both because I had promised the conductor, and also because, when I came to consider the matter, it seemed a very reasonable thing to do. I could not make out whether it was accidental or not, and to this day am not wholly satisfied in regard to it."

"The lack of motive would seem to be in his favor," said the lawyer from Denver, tentatively; "don't you think so?"

"I don't know. A few weeks after my return home, my wife called my attention to a letter from an insurance company, notifying me that two accident policies on my life, taken out 'in favor of Charles G. Wait, manager,' would lapse in a few days unless renewed. Like a flash the incident I have related came back to me. The swaying car, the crunching wheels, the train-lights flashing on the gray, riven rocks, the grip on the hand-rail, the rushing wind, the insecure foothold—all came over me so suddenly and with such a terrifying suggestiveness that my hands shook, I felt myself grow pale, my knees became weak and that sudden thirst which so frequently attends great excitement made me ask—huskily enough, I do not doubt—that she would give me something to drink."

"You think then——"

"I think it was one of that very frequent class of cases in which men wish a thing might happen, perhaps make some preparation for it, but at the last moment find themselves unable to carry the desire into effect. He was no doubt disappointed at the results of the trip, thought some accident might befall me on this, before it was over, and naturally sought to provide against such contingency. He may have thought of this as we started to cross the platform, but I am inclined to think the fall was accidental, and his interest in such a mishap only occurred to him when he saw how near his venture was to realization. However, I have never crossed a platform

on a moving train since that time without closing the door behind me."

"An' I don't blame ye, after that experience," said the old Scotchman. "After all, I think you're probably right in your conclusion. Many a mon, when he comes face to face with an accident that means advantage to himself, may hesitate to do the

right thing without any set purpose to do wrong. I came very near volunteering for a striped suit in that way myself, once upon a time."

"Would you mind telling us about it, sir?" asked the Professor, with a seriousness that attracted my attention.

"Not to-night," was the reply, that carried in its tone assent.

"Enough is as good as a feast, ye know, an' we've a lang forenoon before us ere we pull into Barstow—a dreary one it is down the valley, too—alongside o' a river that loses its way so many times that one never feels certain where it means to go finally. It's the first blink we get of the empire that lies be-

yond the great mountains—a tongue of green that runs up into the brown barrenness, where even the echoes are lost in the boundless silence and the heart has a warm greeting for the hopeful faces and the signs of human labor. Barstow, methinks, is the western border of the 'dead world' ye spake of," with a nod to the Lecturer. "So I bid ye good-night."





## BIRD OF PASSAGE \*

BY BEATRICE HARRADEN

It was about four in the afternoon when a young girl came into the salon of the little hotel at C. in Switzerland, and drew her chair up to the fire.

"You are soaked through," said an elderly lady, who was herself trying to get roasted. "You ought to lose no time in changing your clothes."

"I have not anything to change," said the young girl, laughing. "Oh, I shall soon be dry!"

"Have you lost all your luggage?" asked the lady, sympathetically.

"No," said the young girl, "I had none to lose." And she smiled a little mischievously, as though she knew by instinct that her companion's sympathy would at once degenerate into suspicion.

"I don't mean to say that I have not a knapsack," she added, considerably. "I have walked a long distance—in fact, from Z."

"And where did you leave your companions?" asked the lady, with a touch of forgiveness in her voice.

"I am without companions, just as I am without luggage," laughed the girl.

And then she opened the piano, and struck a few notes. There was something caressing in the way in which she touched the keys; whoever she was, she knew how to make sweet music; sad music, too, full of that undefinable longing, like the holding out of one's arms to one's friends in the hopeless distance.

The lady bending over the fire looked up at the little girl, and forgot that she had brought neither friends nor luggage with her. She hesitated for one moment, and then she took the childish face between her hands and kissed it.

\* A selection from Blackwood's Magazine.

"Thank you, dear, for your music," she said, gently.

"The piano is terribly out of tune," said the little girl suddenly, and she ran out of the room and came back carrying her knapsack.

"What are you going to do?" asked her companion.

"I am going to tune the piano," the little girl said; and she took a tuning-hammer out of her knapsack, and began her work in real earnest. She evidently knew what she was about, and pegged away at the notes as though her whole life depended on the result.

The lady by the fire was lost in amazement. Who could she be? Without luggage and without friends, and with a tuning-hammer!

Meanwhile one of the gentlemen had strolled into the salon: but hearing the sound of tuning, and being in secret possession of nerves, he fled, saying, "The tuner, by Jove!"

A few minutes afterwards Miss Blake, whose nerves were no secret possession, hastened into the salon, and in her usual imperious fashion, demanded instant silence.

"I have just done," said the little girl. "The piano was so terribly out of tune; I could not resist the temptation."

Miss Blake, who never listened to what any one said, took it for granted that the little girl was the tuner, for whom M. le Propriétaire had promised to send; and having bestowed on her a condescending nod, passed out into the garden, where she told some of the visitors that the piano had been tuned at last, and that the tuner was a young woman of rather eccentric appearance.

"Really it is quite abominable how women thrust themselves into every profession," she remarked, in her masculine voice. "It is so unfeminine, so unseemly."

There was nothing of the feminine about Miss Blake; her horse-cloth dress, her waistcoat and high collar, and her billy-cock hat were of the masculine genus; even her nerves could not be called feminine, since we learn from two or three doctors (taken off their guard) that nerves are neither feminine nor masculine, but common.

"I should like to see this tuner," said one of the tennis-players, leaning against a tree.

"Here she comes," said Miss Blake, as the little girl was seen sauntering into the garden.

The men put up their eye-glasses, and saw a little lady with

a childish face and soft brown hair, of strictly feminine appearance and bearing. The goat came towards her and began nibbling at her frock. She seemed to understand the manner of goats, and played with him to his heart's content. One of the tennis-players, Oswald Everard by name, strolled down to the bank where she was having her frolic.

"Good afternoon," he said, raising his cap. "I hope the goat is not worrying you. Poor little fellow! This is his last day of play. He is to be killed to-morrow for *table d'hôte*."

"What a shame!" she said. "Fancy to be killed, and then grumbled at!"

"That is precisely what we do here," he said, laughing. "We grumble at everything we eat. And I own to being one of the grumpiest, though the lady in the horse-cloth dress yonder follows close upon my heels."

"She was the lady who was annoyed at me because I tuned the piano," the little girl said. "Still it had to be done. It was plainly my duty. I seemed to have come for that purpose."

"It has been confoundedly annoying having it out of tune," he said. "I've had to give up singing altogether. But what a strange profession you have chosen! Very unusual, isn't it?"

"Why, surely not," she answered, amused. "It seems to me that every other woman has taken to it. The wonder to me is that any one ever scores a success. Nowadays, however, no one could amass a huge fortune out of it."

"No one, indeed!" replied Oswald Everard, laughing. "What on earth made you take to it?"

"It took to me," she said, simply. "It wrapt me round with enthusiasm. I could think of nothing else. I vowed that I would rise to the top of my profession. I worked day and night. But it means incessant toil for years if one wants to make any headway."

"Good gracious! I thought it was merely a matter of a few months," he said, smiling at the little girl.

"A few months!" she repeated, scornfully. "You are speaking the language of an amateur. No: one has to work faithfully year after year; to grasp the possibilities and pass on to greater possibilities. You imagine what it must feel like to touch the notes, and know that you are keeping the listeners spell-bound; that you are taking them into a fairyland of sound, where petty personality is lost in vague longing and regret."

"I confess I had not thought of it in that way," he said, hum-

bly. "I have only regarded it as a necessary, everyday evil; and to be quite honest with you, I fail to see now how it can inspire enthusiasm. I wish I could see," he added, looking up at the engaging little figure before him.

"Never mind," she said, laughing at his distress; "I forgive you. And after all, you are not the only person who looks upon it as a necessary evil. My poor old guardian abominated it. He made many sacrifices to come and listen to me. He knew I liked to see his kind old face, and that the presence of a real friend inspired me with confidence."

"I should not have thought it was nervous work," he said.

"Try it and see," she answered. "But surely you spoke of singing. Are you not nervous when you sing?"

"Sometimes," he replied, rather stiffly. "But that is slightly different." (He was very proud of his singing, and made a great fuss about it.) "Your profession, as I remarked before, is an unavoidable nuisance. When I think what I have suffered from the gentlemen of your profession, I only wonder that I have any brains left. But I am uncourteous."

"No, no," she said. "Let me hear about your sufferings."

"Whenever I have specially wanted to be quiet," he said, and then he glanced at her childish little face, and he hesitated. "It seems so rude of me," he added. He was the soul of courtesy, although he was an amateur tenor singer.

"Please tell me," the little girl said, in her winning way.

"Well," he said, gathering himself together, "it is the one subject on which I can be eloquent. Ever since I can remember, I have been worried and tortured by those rascals. I have tried in every way to escape from them, but there is a cruel fate working against me. Yes; I believe that all the tuners in the universe are in league against me, and have marked me out for their special prey."

"All the what?" asked the little girl, with a jerk in her voice.

"All the tuners, of course," he replied, rather snappishly. "I know that we cannot do without them; but, good heavens! they have no tact, no consideration, no mercy. Whenever I've wanted to write or read quietly, that fatal knock has come at the door, and I've known by instinct that all chance of peace was over. Whenever I've been giving a luncheon-party, the tuner has arrived, with his abominable black bag, and his abominable card, which has to be signed at once. On one occasion I was just proposing to a girl in her father's library, when the

tuner struck up in the drawing-room. I left off suddenly, and fled from the house. But there is no escape from these fiends: I believe they are swarming about in the air like so many bacteria. And how, in the name of goodness, you should deliberately choose to be one of them, and should be so enthusiastic over your work, puzzles me beyond all words. Don't say that you carry a black bag, and present cards which have to be filled up at the most inconvenient time; don't——"

He stopped suddenly, for the little girl was convulsed with laughter. She laughed until the tears rolled down her cheeks; and then she dried her eyes and laughed again.

"Excuse me," she said, "I can't help myself; it's so funny."

"It may be funny to you," he said, laughing in spite of himself; "but it is not funny to me."

"Of course it isn't," she replied, making a desperate effort to be serious. "Well, tell me something more about these tuners."

"Not another word," he said, gallantly. "I am ashamed of myself as it is. Come to the end of the garden, and let me show you the view down into the valley."

She had conquered her fit of merriment, but her face wore a settled look of mischief, and she was evidently the possessor of some secret joke. She seemed in capital health and spirits, and had so much to say that was bright and interesting, that Oswald Everard found himself becoming reconciled to the whole race of tuners. He was amazed to learn that she had walked all the way from Z, and quite alone too.

"Oh, I don't think anything of that," she said; "I had a splendid time, and I caught four rare butterflies. I would not have missed those for anything. As for the going about by myself, that is a second nature. Besides, I do not belong to any one. That has its advantages, and I suppose its disadvantages; but at present I have only discovered the advantages. The disadvantages will discover themselves!"

"I believe you are what the novels call an advanced young woman," he said. "Perhaps you give lectures on Woman's Suffrage or something of that sort?"

"I have very often mounted the platform," she answered. "In fact, I am never so happy as when addressing an immense audience. A most unfeminine thing to do, isn't it? What would the lady yonder in the horse-cloth dress and billy-cock hat say? Don't you think you ought to go and help her to drive away the goat? She looks so frightened. She interests me deeply. I

wonder whether she has written an essay on the Feminine in Woman. I should like to read it: it would do me so much good."

"You are at least a true woman," he said, laughing, "for I see you can be spiteful. The tuning has not driven that away."

"Ah, I had forgotten about the tuning," she answered, brightly; "but now you remind me, I have been seized by a great idea."

"Won't you tell it to me?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "I keep my great ideas for myself, and work them out in secret. And this one is particularly amusing. What fun I shall have!"

"But why keep the fun to yourself?" he said. "We all want to be amused here; we all want to be stirred up; a little fun would be a charity."

"Very well, since you wish it, you shall be stirred up," she answered; "but you must give me time to work out my great idea. I do not hurry about things, not even about my professional duties. For I have a strong feeling that it is vulgar to be always amassing riches! As I have neither a husband nor a brother to support, I have chosen less wealth, and more leisure to enjoy all the loveliness of life! So you see I take my time about everything. And to-morrow I shall catch butterflies at my leisure, and lie amongst the dear old pines, and work at my great idea."

"I shall catch butterflies," said her companion. "And I too shall lie amongst the dear old pines."

"Just as you please," she said; and at that moment the *table d'hôte* bell rang.

The little girl hastened to the bureau and spoke rapidly in German to the cashier.

"Ach, Fräulein!" he said. "You are not really serious?"

"Yes, I am," she said. "I don't want them to know my name. It will only worry me. Say I am the young lady who tuned the piano."

She had scarcely given these directions and mounted to her room when Oswald Everard, who was unusually interested in his mysterious companion, came to the bureau and asked for the name of the little lady.

"Es ist das Fräulein welches das Piano gestimmt hat," answered the man, returning with unusual quickness to his account-book.



No one spoke to the little girl at *table d'hôte*; but, for all that, she enjoyed her dinner, and gave her serious attention to all the courses. Being thus solidly occupied, she had not much leisure to bestow on the conversation of the other guests. Nor was it specially original: it treated of the shortcomings of the chef, the tastelessness of the soup, the toughness of the beef, and all the many failings which go to complete a mountain-hotel dinner. But suddenly, so it seemed to the little girl, this time-honored talk passed into another phase: she heard the word music mentioned, and she became at once interested to learn what these people had to say on a subject which was dearer to her than any other.

"For my own part," said a stern-looking old man, "I have no words to describe what a gracious comfort music has been to me all my life. It is the noblest language which man may understand and speak. And I sometimes think that those who know it, or know something of it, are able at rare moments to find an answer to life's perplexing problems."

The little girl looked up from her plate. Robert Browning's words rose to her lips, but she did not give them utterance—

"God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;  
The rest may reason, and welcome; 'tis we musicians know."

"I have lived through a long life," said another elderly man, "and have therefore had my share of trouble; but the grief of being obliged to give up music was the grief which held me longest, or which perhaps has never left me. I still crave for the gracious pleasure of touching once more the strings of a violoncello, and hearing the dear tender voice singing and throbbing and answering even to such poor skill as mine. I still yearn to take my part in concerted music, and be one of those privileged to play Beethoven's string quartettes. But that will have to be in another incarnation, I think."

He glanced at his shrunken arm, and then, as though ashamed of this allusion to his own personal infirmity, he added hastily:

"But when the first pang of such a pain is over, there remains the comfort of being a listener. At first one does not think it a comfort; but as time goes on, there is no resisting its magic influence. And Lowell said rightly, 'that one of God's great charities is music.'"

"I did not know you were musical, Mr. Keith," said an English lady. "You have never before spoken of music."

"Perhaps not, madam," he answered. "One does not often

speak of what one cares for most of all. But when I am in London, I rarely miss hearing our best players."

At this point others joined in, and the various merits of eminent pianists were warmly discussed.

"What a wonderful name that little English lady has made for herself!" said the Major, who was considered an authority on all subjects. "I would go anywhere to hear Miss Thyra Flowerdew. We all ought to be very proud of her. She has taken even the German musical world by storm, and they say her recitals at Paris have been brilliantly successful. I myself have heard her at New York, Leipsic, London, Berlin, and even Chicago."

The little girl stirred uneasily in her chair.

"I don't think Miss Flowerdew has ever been to Chicago," she said.

There was a dead silence. The admirer of Miss Thyra Flowerdew looked much annoyed, and twiddled his watch-chain. He had meant to say Philadelphia, but he did not think it necessary to own to his mistake.

"What impertinence!" said one of the ladies to Miss Blake. "What can she know about it? Is she not the young person who tuned the piano?"

"Perhaps she tunes Miss Thyra Flowerdew's piano!" suggested Miss Blake in a loud whisper.

"You are right, madam," said the little girl, quietly. "I have often tuned Miss Flowerdew's piano."

There was another embarrassing silence; and then a lovely old lady, whom every one revered, came to the rescue.

"I think her playing is simply superb," she said. "Nothing that I ever hear satisfies me so entirely. She has all the tenderness of an angel's touch."

"Listening to her," said the Major, who had now recovered from his annoyance at being interrupted, "one becomes unconscious of her presence, for she *is the music itself*. And that is rare. It is but seldom nowadays that we are allowed to forget the personality of the player. And yet her personality is an unusual one: having once seen her, it would not be easy to forget her. I should recognize her anywhere."

As he spoke, he glanced at the little tuner, and could not help admiring her dignified composure under circumstances which might have been distressing to any one; and when she rose with the others, he followed her, and said, stiffly—

"I regret that I was the indirect cause of putting you in an awkward position."

"It is really of no consequence," she said, brightly. "If you think I was impertinent, I ask your forgiveness. I did not mean to be officious. The words were spoken before I was aware of them."

She passed into the salon, where she found a quiet corner for herself, and read some of the newspapers. No one took the slightest notice of her: not a word was spoken to her; but when she relieved the company of her presence, her impertinence was commented on.

"I am sorry that she heard what I said," remarked Miss Blake. "But she did not seem to mind. These young women who go out into the world lose the edge of their sensitiveness and femininity. I have always observed that."

"How much they are spared then!" answered some one.

Meanwhile the little girl slept soundly. She had merry dreams, and finally woke up laughing. She hurried over her breakfast, and then stood ready to go for a butterfly-hunt. She looked thoroughly happy, and evidently had found, and was holding tightly the key to life's enjoyment.

Oswald Everard was waiting on the balcony, and he reminded her that he intended to go with her.

"Come along, then," she answered; "we must not lose a moment."

They caught butterflies, they picked flowers, they ran; they lingered by the wayside, they sang; they climbed, and he marveled at her easy speed. Nothing seemed to tire her, and everything seemed to delight her,—the flowers, the birds, the clouds, the grasses, and the fragrance of the pine-woods.

"Is it not good to live?" she cried. "Is it not splendid to take in this scented air? Draw in as many long breaths as you can. Isn't it good? Don't you feel now as though you were ready to move mountains? I do. What a dear old nurse Nature is! How she pets us, and gives us the best of her treasures!"

Her happiness invaded Oswald Everard's soul, and he felt like a schoolboy once more, rejoicing in a fine day, and his liberty; with nothing to spoil the freshness of the air, and nothing to threaten the freedom of the moment.

"Is it not good to live?" he cried. "Yes, indeed it is, if we know how to enjoy."

They had come upon some haymakers, and the little girl hastened up to help them. There she was in the midst of them, laughing and talking to the women, and helping them to pile up the hay on the shoulders of a broad-backed man, who then conveyed his burden to a pear-shaped stack. Oswald Everard watched his companion for a moment, and then, quite forgetting his dignity as an amateur tenor singer, he too lent his aid, and did not leave off until his companion sank exhausted on the ground.

"Oh," she laughed, "what delightful work for a very short time! Come along; let us go into that brown ch<sup>^</sup>let yonder and ask for some milk. I am simply parched with thirst. Thank you, but I prefer to carry my own flowers."

"What an independent little lady you are," he said.

"It is quite necessary in our profession, I can assure you," she said, with a tone of mischief in her voice. "That reminds me that my profession is evidently not looked upon with any favor by the visitors of the hotel. I am heartbroken to think that I have not won the esteem of that lady in the billy-cock hat. What will she say to you for coming out with me? And what will she say of me for allowing you to come? I wonder whether she will say, 'How unfeminine!' I wish I could hear her!"

"I don't suppose you care," he said. "You seem to be a wild little bird."

"I don't care what a person of that description says," replied his companion.

"What on earth made you contradict the Major at dinner last night?" he asked. "I was not at the table, but some one told me of the incident; and I felt very sorry about it. What could you know of Miss Thyra Flowerdew?"

"Well, considering that she is in my profession, of course I know something about her," said the little girl.

"Confound it all!" he said, rather rudely. "Surely there is some difference between the bellows-blower and the organist."

"Absolutely none," she answered—"merely a variation of the original theme!"

As she spoke she knocked at the door of the ch<sup>^</sup>let, and asked the old dame to give them some milk. They sat in the *Stube*, and the little girl looked about, and admired the spinning-wheel, and the quaint chairs, and the queer old jugs, and the pictures on the wall.

"Ah, but you shall see the other room," the old peasant-woman said, and she led them into a small apartment, which was evidently intended for a study. It bore evidences of unusual taste and care, and one could see that some loving hand had been trying to make it a real sanctum of refinement. There was even a small piano. A carved book-rack was fastened to the wall.

The old dame did not speak at first; she gave her guests time to recover from the astonishment which she felt they must be experiencing; then she pointed proudly to the piano.

"I bought that for my daughters," she said, with a strange mixture of sadness and triumph. "I wanted to keep them at home with me, and I saved and saved and got enough money to buy the piano. They had always wanted to have one, and I thought they would then stay with me. They liked music and books, and I knew they would be glad to have a room of their own, where they might read and play and study; and so I gave them this corner."

"Well, mother," asked the little girl, "and where are they this afternoon?"

"Ah!" she answered, sadly, "they did not care to stay. But it was natural enough; and I was foolish to grieve. Besides, they come to see me——"

"And then they play to you?" asked the little girl, gently.

"They say the piano is out of tune," the old dame said. "I don't know. Perhaps you can tell."

The little girl sat down to the piano, and struck a few chords.

"Yes," she said, "it is badly out of tune. Give me the tuning-hammer. I am sorry," she added, smiling at Oswald Everard, "but I cannot neglect my duty. Don't wait for me."

"I will wait for you," he said sullenly; and he went into the balcony and smoked his pipe, and tried to possess his soul in patience.

When she had faithfully done her work, she played a few simple melodies, such as she knew the old woman would love and understand; and she turned away when she saw that the listener's eyes were moist.

"Play once again," the old woman whispered. "I am dreaming of beautiful things."

So the little tuner touched the keys again with all the tenderness of an angel.

"Tell your daughters," she said, as she rose to say good-by,

"that the piano is now in good tune. Then they will play to you the next time they come."

"I shall always remember you, mademoiselle," the old woman said; and, almost unconsciously, she too took the childish face and kissed it.

Oswald Everard was waiting for his companion in the hay-field; and when she apologized to him for this little professional intermezzo, as she called it, he recovered from his sulkiness and readjusted his nerves, which the noise of the tuning had somewhat disturbed.

"It was very good of you to tune the old dame's piano," he said, looking at her with renewed interest.

"Some one had to do it, of course," she answered, brightly, "and I am glad the chance fell to me. What a comfort it is to think that the next time those daughters come to see her, they will play to her, and make her very happy—poor old dear!"

"You puzzle me greatly," he said. "I cannot for the life of me think what made you choose your calling. You must have many gifts—any one who talks with you must see that at once; and you play quite nicely too."

"I am sorry that my profession sticks in your throat," she answered. "Do be thankful that I am nothing worse than a tuner. For I might be something worse—a snob, for instance."

And, so speaking, she dashed after a butterfly, and left him to recover from her words. He was conscious of having deserved a reproof; and when at last he overtook her, he said as much, and asked for her kind indulgence.

"I forgive you," she said, laughing. "You and I are not looking at things from the same point of view; but we have had a splendid morning together, and I have enjoyed every minute of it. And to-morrow I go on my way."

"And to-morrow you go," he repeated. "Can it not be the day after to-morrow?"

"I am a bird of passage," she said, shaking her head. "You must not seek to detain me. I have taken my rest, and off I go to other climes."

They had arrived at the hotel, and Oswald Everard saw no more of his companion until the evening, when she came down rather late for *table d'hôte*. She hurried over her dinner and went into the salon. She closed the door and sat down to the piano, and lingered there without touching the keys; once or

twice she raised her hands, and then she let them rest on the notes, and half-unconsciously they began to move and make sweet music, and then they drifted into Schumann's "Abendlied," and then the little girl played some of his "Kinderscenen," and some of his "Fantasie Stücke," and some of his songs.

Her touch and feeling were exquisite, and her phrasing betrayed the true musician. The strains of music reached the dining-room, and one by one the guests came creeping in, moved by the music and anxious to see the musician.

The little girl did not look up; she was in a Schumann mood that evening, and only the players of Schumann know what enthralling possession he takes of their very spirit. All the passion and pathos and wildness and longing had found an inspired interpreter; and those who listened to her were held by the magic which was her own secret, and which had won for her such honor as comes only to the few. She understood Schumann's music, and was at her best with him.

Had she, perhaps, chosen to play his music this evening because she wished to be at her best? or was she merely being impelled by an overwhelming force within her? Perhaps it was something of both.

Was she wishing to humiliate these people who had received her so coldly? This little girl was only human; perhaps there was something of that feeling too. Who can tell? But she played as she had never played in London, or Paris, or Berlin, or New York, or Philadelphia.

At last she arrived at the Carneval, and those who heard her declared afterwards that they had never listened to a more magnificent rendering. The tenderness was so restrained; the vigor was so refined. When the last notes of that spirited "Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins" had died away, she glanced at Oswald Everard, who was standing near her, almost dazed.

"And now my favorite piece of all," she said, and she at once began the Second Novellette, the finest of the eight, but seldom played in public.

What can one say of the wild rush of the leading theme, and the pathetic longing of the Intermezzo?—

"The murmuring, dying notes  
that fall as soft as snow on the sea;"

and

"The passionate strain that deeply going,  
refines the bosom it trembles through."

What can one say of those vague aspirations and finest thoughts which possess the very dullest amongst us when such music as that which the little girl had chosen, catches us and keeps us, if only for a passing moment, but that moment of the rarest worth and loveliness in our unlovely lives ?

What can one say of the highest music, except that, like death, it is the great leveller: it gathers us all to its tender keeping—and we rest.

The little girl ceased playing. There was not a sound to be heard; the magic was still holding her listeners. When at last they had freed themselves with a sigh, they pressed forward to greet her.

“There is only one person who can play like that,” cried the Major, with sudden inspiration—“she is Miss Thyra Flowerdew.”

The little girl smiled.

“That is my name,” she said, simply; and she slipped out of the room.

The next morning at an early hour, the Bird of Passage took her flight onwards, but she was not destined to go off unobserved. Oswald Everard saw the little figure swinging along the road, and he overtook her.

“You little wild bird!” he said; “and so this was your great idea: to have your fun out of us all, and then play to us and make us feel, I don’t know how—and then to go.”

“You said the company wanted stirring up,” she answered; “and I rather fancy I have stirred them up.”

“And what do you suppose you have done for me?” he asked.

“I hope I have proved to you that the bellows-blower and the organist are sometimes identical,” she answered.

But he shook his head.

“Little wild bird,” he said, “you have given me a great idea, and I will tell you what it is—to *tame you*. So good-by for the present.”

“Good-by,” she said. “But wild birds are not so easily tamed.”

Then she waved her hand over her head, and went on her way singing.



## JOCK'S LI'L' BOY\*

BY FRANK H. SWEET



CAN'T let you off now, Jock," I expostulated, impatiently. "These lines must be run by Saturday, and you are the best chopper I have. Can't you wait till next week?"

Jock looked down at me a little reproachfully I thought.

"I'se *bleeged* ter go, boss," he said, decisively. "I done tole yo' my li'l' boy's wuss. Marg'et's Tobe jes' fotched me de news. I'd like pow'ful ter he'p yo'-all, but I jes' cayn't, don' yo' see?"

"Very well," I answered irritably, as I opened my pocket-book and counted out the money due him. "Only don't come whining around after more work. I can't be forever taking on new hands and learning them the ropes. I want men who will stand by me."

I spoke rather more vehemently than I meant to, but I liked Jock, and was very unwilling to have him go. He had only been with me a few weeks, but was already worth any two men I had. Considerably over six feet in height, and strong and massive in proportion, he was at once fertile in expedients and perfectly obedient to orders. These two unusual attributes were what had recommended him to me in the first place, for my experience with negroes had taught me that they were usually dull and shiftless. But Jock was different from any man I had ever met, white or black. He was an indefatigable hunter and fisherman, and there was not a bird, or beast, or phase of wood-life, with which he did not seem to be familiar. And his familiarity was not that of ignorance. I was often astonished at the stray bits of scientific information which came unconsciously from his lips. He never seemed to get weary, and, out of work hours, was usually off in the woods, or busy about the camp-fire.

\* Written for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

Most of our game was caught by him during the night, and, indeed, most of it was prepared by him also, for he seemed to know more about cooking than our camp-boy himself. Nearly every day he brought me a delicious stew or roast which he had prepared himself, and always presented it with some such remark as: "De doctor show me 'bout dis," or, "Dis de way de doctor done hit."

I was thinking regretfully of these extra dishes as I turned my instrument around, and sighted back over the line. Everything was all right, and I signalled the rear man to come forward. As I took out my field-book to make some notes, I was conscious of a slight touch on my shoulder.

"What, not gone yet?" I asked.

"No, boss; I cayn't go disaway. Ef I ain' come back no mo', I don' wan' yo' t'ink ob me as no 'count nigger. I jes' bleegeed ter go."

"Oh, that's all right," I answered, a little ashamed of my ill-temper. "You needn't mind what I said about not coming back. I was out of sorts. If I have a place I shall be glad to take you on any time."

The black face cleared instantly.

"T'ank yo', boss! T'ank yo', sah! I like yo'-alls wuk. Yo'se de bes' boss I'se had, 'cep'n' de doctor."

I glanced down the line. The rear man was fully one-fourth of a mile away, and walking slowly. It would be ten minutes before he would arrive. I slipped the field-book into my pocket, and sat down upon a stump.

"Who is this doctor you are forever talking about, Jock?" I asked. "I am getting curious about him."

Jock's face became grave once more. I fancied I could see tears glistening in his eyes.

"He's de bes' man dat eber lib, sah; de bes' man de good Gawd eber made. I been his body-sarment for ten year, an' wuk for him, an' watch ober him, an' nuss him. I watch him so I almos' know w'at he t'ink 'bout. He didn't hab no fo'ks, nowhars; an' he uster say dat I war his'n's fambly. He tuk me in de woods w'en he hunt bugs an' t'ings, an' he tuk me in de city w'en he wuk for de pore fo'ks. He done let me he'p in mos' eberyting he do."

"How came you to leave him?"

"I didn' leabe him, sah; he done lef' me. De good Gawd tuk him. W'en de yaller fever bruk out he wuk night an' day,

lak he allers do. Mos' eberybody git outen de city; but de pore fo'ks hatter stay, an' de doctors an' nusses hatter stay ter look arter 'em. Dr. Hatton stan' hit for seben week, den he tuk de fever an' die."

"Dr. Hatton!" I exclaimed. "That name sounds familiar."

"Co'se hit do, sah. De papers war full ob hit. De doctor war a rich man, an' he done gib bofe his life an' money to de cause. I reckon de whole worl' done hear bout'n *him*. He wuk night an' day, all de time, an' nebber t'ought ob res'."

"And you remained with him through it all?" I asked.

"Ob co'se!" Jock answered, simply. "De doctor 'lowed I war good he'p. I war big an' strong, an' could wuk roun' an' lif' de sick fo'ks."

"And you didn't get the fever?"

"No, sah!" showing his teeth a little. "I reckon dis nigger's skin too t'ick for fever git frou. W'en de doctor die I hab no wuk, so I nuss roun' till de winter come an' brek de fever. Den I pick up all de doctor's t'ings. Yo' see," his voice growing low and tremulous, "de doctor done tole me sell eberyting he hab lef', an' buy me a li'l' home somewhar. I git fo' hundred dollar, an' come disaway. Yo' know?"

I nodded. I had often seen and admired Jock's little vine-covered cottage, and wondered at his exquisite taste in shrubs and flowers. On one occasion I had met him walking back and forth, crooning some strange African melody to a pitiful mite of humanity in his arms. Perhaps this was the "li'l' boy" he was so fond of.

"How old is your little boy?" I asked.

"Dunno, sah. Reckon he's a heap ol'er 'n his size, on 'count o' bein' twisted an' disj'inted. Yo' see, boss, hit didn' 'pear jes' right for me ter use de doctor's money for myse'f. Seemed lak hit orter go to de pore fo'ks, lak de res' ob his forchune. But dar war de orders. So I buy de house, an' den hunts roun' an' fin's de skimpines' pickaninny I kin—one dat ain' de leastes able ter keer for himself—an' sets out ter raise him. My ole mammy come lib wid me, an' he'p look out for t'ings. Den ebery Summer I goes down to der city an' brings up a whole passel o' chil-luns outen de street, an' gibs 'em a good time. Dar's plenty ob melyuns an' sweet 'taters, an' gyarden truck roun' my place; an' off'n I takes 'em out huntin' an' fishin'. I 'low dey done enjy hit from de way dey projec' roun'," and Jock threw back his head and laughed heartily at some of their "projecting." Then he suddenly became grave.

"Does yo' know, boss," he continued, solemnly, "hit 'pears mighty strange ter me sometimes, lak as if de Lawd's han' war in hit. Dat pore li'l' pickaninny, w'at I 'low ter be de runties' one in de whole worl', is tu'nin' out ter be sompin' 'stronery. He 'n scrape de fiddle lak a born musicianer, an' for de banjo an' flute—lors! hit brings out de tears jes' ter lis'n. Does yo' know, sah," abruptly, "w'at I'se wukin' up hyer fer?"

"To earn some money, I suppose," I answered.

"Dat's hit, prezac'ly, sah. But I ain' need no money for housekeepin'. I raises gyarden truck, an' chickens, an' t'ings; an' I goes fishin' an' huntin'. No, sah! I'se gittin' money for dat li'l' boy's musicianin'. He's plumb 'stracted 'bout'n an orgin. I'se been totin' him up ter Mis' Hun'erford's lately, so 't he mout lis'n ter her playin'. An', fer a fac', sah, dat li'l' boy 'd jes' cock his head on one side whilst she played a chune, den he'd clomb up on dat stool an' play the same chune right smack frou, ebery dot an' skiver prezac'. Mis' Hun'erford 'low 't war truly 'stonishin'. Yes, sah! dat boy gwyne hab an orgin, an' I'se gwyne hab him learn play jes' lak white fo'ks, off'n paper."

At this moment the rear man came up and stood waiting for orders. Jock ducked his head and was turning away, when I called him back. Unclasping the glittering chain from my watch I handed it to him.

"Give it to the little boy," I said, "and tell him it is from one of his daddy's friends."

Jock's face grew radiant. A present for himself would not have given him half the pleasure.

The next week my chief sent instructions for me to repair to Terrebonne and survey some swamp lands. I had been there before and knew the place well. In the winter it would not have been so bad, but now! I crushed the brief note impatiently in my hand.

But there was no help for it, so we set about breaking camp. The next day we were ready for departure.

As we stood on the platform of the little way station, waiting for the train, I saw the big, well-known figure of Jock hurrying up the track. In a few moments he stood beside me.

"Clar' for hit, boss, I war 'feared I wouldn't cotch up!" he panted. "I'se mof' run de bref outen me."

I welcomed him heartily. His broad shoulders and knowledge of woodcraft would be invaluable in that out-of-the-way place. The terms of his service were quickly arranged, and then I asked him about the little boy.

"I dunno for shore yet, sah," he said, gravely. "De doctor 'low he war in bad fix, an' better be sont up Norf to a gran' hospital. He 'low de boy cayn't nebber be raised lak he is; but dat maybe de big doctors mout unwin' de twistes, an' fix him lak udder boys. Ef dey do dat," with a rare smile, "I'll shorely t'ank de good Lawd all de res' ob my life."

"It will be very expensive," I ventured.

"Yes, sah; so de doctor tole me. He 'lowed he'd ax Jedge Hun'erford ter he'p some, but I done stop *dat*," throwing his head back proudly. "I don't ax no he'p long's I kin he'p myse'f. De li'l' boy's *mine*, an' I'se de one ter take car' ob him." Then, with a slight quaver in his voice, he added, abruptly, "I done sol' de house an' pigs an' t'ings."

"Why, that's too bad!" I exclaimed, involuntarily. "Wasn't there any other way?"

"No, sah; an' de house an' t'ings didn't fotch quite enuf. De li'l' boy 'll hatter be thar mos' a year, an' doctors' stuff an' nussin' cos's a heap. I done hire a room for my ole mammy, an' will send her sompin ebery mont'. All de rest mus' go ter de hospital. I 'splained hit ter de doctor, an' he 'lowed he'd fix hit all right."

"So you have already sent the boy?"

"Yes, sah. De doctor done sont a nuss wid him yes'day."

A faint whistle in the distance announced the approaching train. I hastily gathered up my kit, and stood waiting.

It was night when we reached Thibodeaux. The next day we purchased provisions, and set out for the scene of our labors. Three months later I received instructions to cross over into Texas. It was spring before we returned to Florida.

One day Jock burst into my tent with an open letter in his hand.

"He's done cured!" he cried, radiantly. "All de twistes an' disj'int's tuk outen him. He's a comin' home now; walkin' from de kyars lak udder boys. Glory ter de Lam'! But 'scuse me, boss," lowering his voice suddenly. "I'se tickled clean frou. I reckon yo'll hatter lemme off a few days. I mus' see dat li'l' boy."

"Of course! But will you come back?"

"Suttin'ly, sah! I mus' work right peart, now, an' mek heaps o' money. Dar's dat boy's orgin, an' dar's dat home I'm a gwyne ter buy back. Yes, sah, I'll mos' shorely come back."

## A CASE OF DESERTION

BY W. W. JACOBS



HE sun was just rising as the small tub-like steamer, or, to be more correct, steam-barge, the *Bulldog*, steamed past the sleeping town of Gravesend at a good six knots per hour.

There had been a little discussion on the way between her crew and the engineer, who, down in his grimy little engine-room, did his own stoking and everything else necessary. The crew, consisting of captain, mate, and boy, who were doing their first trip on a steamer, had been transferred at the last moment from their sailing-barge, the *Witch*, and found to their discomfort that the engineer, who had not expected to sail so soon, was terribly and abusively drunk. Every moment he could spare from his engines he thrust the upper part of his body through the small hatchway and rowed with his commander.

"Ahoy, bargee," he shouted, popping up like a jack-in-the-box, after a brief cessation of hostilities.

"Don't take no notice of 'im," said the mate. "'E's got a bottle of brandy down there, an' he's 'alf mad."

"If I knew anything o' them blessed engines," growled the skipper, "I'd go an' hit 'im over the head."

"But you don't," said the mate, "and neither do I, so you'd better keep quiet."

"You think you're a fine feller," continued the engineer, "standing up there an' playing with that little wheel. You think you're doing all the work. What's the boy doing? Send him down to stoke."

"Go down," said the skipper, grinning with fury, and the boy reluctantly obeyed.

"You think," said the engineer, pathetically, after he had cuffed the boy's head and dropped him down below by the scruff of his neck, "you think because I've got a black face I'm not a man. There's many a hoily face 'ides a good 'art."

"I don't think nothing about it," grunted the skipper; "you do your work, and I'll do mine."

"Don't you give me none of your back answers," bellowed the engineer, "'cos I won't 'ave 'em."

The skipper shrugged his shoulders, and exchanged glances with his sympathetic mate. "Wait till I get 'im ashore," he murmured.

"The biler is wore out," said the engineer, reappearing after a hasty dive below. "It may bust at any moment."

As though to confirm his words, fearful sounds were heard proceeding from below.

"It's only the boy," said the mate; "he's scared—natural."

"I thought it was the biler," said the skipper, with a sigh of relief. "It was loud enough."

As he spoke the boy got his head out of the hatchway, and rendered desperate with fear, fairly fought his way past the engineer, and gained the deck.

"Very good," said the engineer, as he followed him on deck and staggered to the side. "I've had enough o' you lot."

"Hadn't you better go down to them engines," shouted the skipper.

"Am I your *slave*?" demanded the engineer, tearfully. "Tell me that. Am I your slave?"

"Go down and do your work like a sensible man," was the reply.

At these words the engineer took umbrage at once, and, scowling fiercely, removed his greasy jacket and flung his cap on the deck. He then finished the brandy which he had brought up with him, and gazed owlshly at the Kentish shore.

"I'm going to have a wash," he said loudly, and, sitting down, removed his boots.

"Go down to the engines first," said the skipper, "and I'll send the boy to you with a bucket and some soap."

"Bucket," replied the engineer scornfully as he moved to the side. "I'm going to have a proper wash."

"Hold him," roared the skipper suddenly. "Hold him."

The mate, realizing the situation, rushed to seize him, but the engineer, with a mad laugh, put his hands on the side and vaulted into the water. When he rose the steamer was twenty yards ahead.

"Go astarn!" yelled the mate.

"How can I go astarn when there's nobody at the engines?" shouted the skipper as he hung on to the wheel and brought the boat's head sharply around. "Git a line ready."

The mate, with a coil of rope in his hand, rushed to the side, but his benevolent efforts were frustrated by the engineer, who, seeing the boat's head making straight for him, saved his life by an opportune dive. The steamer rushed by.

"Turn 'er agin," screamed the mate.

The captain was already doing so, and in a remarkably short space of time the boat, which had described a complete circle, was making again for the engineer.

"Look out for the line," shouted the mate warningly.

"I don't want your line," yelled the engineer. "I'm going ashore."

"Come aboard," shouted the captain imploringly as they swept past again. "We can't manage the engines."

"Put her round again," said the mate. "I'll go for him with the boat. Haul her in, boy."

The boat, which was dragging astern, was hauled close, and the mate tumbled into her, followed by the boy, just as the captain was in the middle of another circle—to the intense indignation of a crowd of shipping, large and small, which was trying to get by.

"Ahoy!" yelled the master of a tug which was towing a large ship. "Take that steam roundabout out of the way. What the thunder are you doing?"

"Picking up my engineer," replied the captain, as he steamed right across the other's bows and nearly ran down a sailing barge, the skipper of which, a Salvation Army man, was nobly fighting with his feelings.

"Why don't you stop?" he yelled.

"'Cos I can't," wailed the skipper of the *Bulldog*, as he threaded his way between a huge steamer and a schooner, who, in avoiding him, were getting up a little collision on their own account.

"Ahoy, *Bulldog*, ahoy," called the mate, "stand by to pick us up. We've got him."

The skipper smiled in an agonized fashion as he shot past, hotly pursued by his boat. The feeling on board of the other craft as they got out of the way of the *Bulldog*, and nearly ran down her boat, and then in avoiding that nearly ran down something else, cannot be put into plain English, but several captains ventured into the domains of the ornamental with marked success.

"Shut off steam!" yelled the engineer, as the *Bulldog* went by again. "Draw the fires then."



"Who's going to steer while I do it?" bellowed the skipper as he left the wheel for a few seconds to try and get a line to throw them.

By this time the commotion in the river was frightful, and the captain's steering, as he went on his round again, something marvelous to behold. A strange lack of sympathy on the part of brother captains added to his troubles. Every craft he passed had something to say to him, busy as they were, and the remarks were as monotonous as they were insulting. At last, just as he was resolving to run his boat straight down the river until he came to a halt for want of steam, the mate caught the rope he flung, and the *Bulldog* went down the river with her boat made fast to her stern.

"Come aboard, you—you lunatic," he shouted.

"Not afore I knows 'ow I stand," said the engineer, who was now beautifully sober, and in full possession of a somewhat acute intellect.

"What do you mean?" demanded the skipper.

"I don't come aboard," shouted the engineer, "until you, and the mate, and the bye all swear as you won't say nothing about this little game."

"I'll report you the moment I get ashore," roared the skipper.

"I'll give you in charge for desertion. I'll——"

With a supreme gesture the engineer prepared to dive, but the watchful mate fell on his neck and tripped him over a seat.

"Come aboard," cried the skipper, aghast at such determination. "Come aboard, and I'll give you a licking when we get ashore instead."

"Honor bright?" inquired the engineer.

"Honor bright," chorused the three.

The engineer, with all the honors of war, came on board, and after remarking that he felt chilly bathing on an empty stomach, went down below and began to stoke. In the course of the voyage he said that it was worth while making such a fool of himself, if only to see the skipper's beautiful steering, warmly asseverating that there was not another man on the river that could have done it. Before this insidious flattery the skipper's wrath melted like snow before the sun, and by the time they reached port he would as soon have thought of hitting his own father as his smooth-tongued engineer.



BY KARL M. SHERMAN

ALONG a barren sea-shore a family group was leisurely strolling. The sea, which lay unusually quiet, and the level stretch of lifeless sand seemed to have had their effect upon the party, for they moved along silently, each, even to the children, occupied by his own thoughts.

There were four of them, a man and woman, and a boy and girl. As they passed to and fro, I noted especially the face of



the man. It was one of those faces that print themselves upon one's memory, yet leave him powerless to describe. I should say that it was an old face and had seen pleasure and pain, yet the high forehead was unwrinkled, the lips were full and firm, and the eyes clear and deep. He walked as one whose mind was too thoroughly occupied to notice

whither he went or the way. The woman seemed in many ways not so old; in others, older. Her face was less serious and the shadow of a smile lurked about her lips; still, as I watched, I saw that she walked wearily, as if she needed rest. Occasionally she looked up to the man with an expression of admiration such as one might expect a fond daughter to give to an honored parent.

"You take *him*, brother. I cannot lead him any farther." The exclamation—half an entreaty, half a command—first called my attention to the children. The girl was surrounded by a

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myriad of puppets that she was leading by little cords as one leads pets. Looking into her face I saw that she, too, wore an elderly



expression, as if the world were old to her and had lost its novelty.

When she spoke the boy stooped down and picked up a puppet that had broken away from its leading string. Opening his



vest, he thrust the little creature in by his heart, and I saw that there was a countless multitude of similar ones nestling there.

“Eternity and Time are walking the shores of Space with their children, Life and Death,” whispered a spirit, and the vision vanished.

## SAINT CATHERINE \*

BY ANDRÉ THEURIET



“M<sup>A</sup>ITRE BEAURAIN,” cried Mère Anelle, opening, as she spoke, the door leading from the kitchen to the cow-stable, “there are some gentlemen from *Bar* asking for you. They are the deputies sent here by the National Convention, they say.”

“Ah! Show the gentlemen into the front chamber, Anelle. I will but shift my working-jacket and be with them in a moment.”

If the dim light of the stable had permitted it, Mère Anelle could have seen that the ruddy face of François Beaurain-Maire of *Fains-en-Barrois*, had turned quite white at her announcement of these visitors. When his servant had gone back to the kitchen and closed the door behind her, Beaurain let the pitchfork he had been using fall from his hands, and stood there motionless. The sweat had broken out on his forehead, his mouth felt parched and dry, his throat choked. He recovered his composure, however, almost immediately. Going into the kitchen, he filled a small copper basin, which hung by the pump, with water and drank a long and deep draught.

Then reaching down his jacket, hanging from a nail on the wall, he drew it on carefully.

Mère Anelle, in the meantime, had conducted the visitors into the front chamber. There were three of them. The youngest, towards whom his companions manifested a certain deference, and whose dress was more careful and bearing more distinguished than theirs, was a man of about thirty. His face was thin, yellow and clean-shaven. His eyes, gray in color, were glittering and cruel—the eyes of a bird of prey. He was dressed in a maroon-colored riding-coat. It was unbuttoned, and allowed his shirt, blue waistcoat and high, carefully folded white cravat to be seen.

\* Translated from the French, for Short Stories, by Emma M. Phelps.—Copyrighted.

The oldest of the party was a tall man, with broad shoulders, and a head entirely bald. His wide, white cravat half hid his heavy jaws, and thin whiskers of mixed black and gray grew straggling over his gaunt cheeks. The expression of his face was, on the whole, good-humored, which a frown, evidently forced, could not disguise.

The third visitor was a short, thick-set, commonplace-looking person. He wore the usual costume of a "red" at that time—a blood-red woolen cap on his shaggy head—and was wrapped in a torn and dirty *carmagnole*. He had been formerly, it was evident, a small tradesman, to whom the rôle of deputy was a new one. A bookbinder by trade, and answering to the name of Jean Jacques Ranlin, the cognomen given him in former days by his associates, *Coco Jacquot*, still stuck to him.

These three paced majestically up and down the chamber, examining the furniture curiously. The bed, with its canopy and curtains of red figured chintz; the tall wardrobe of oak, with its ornaments of brass; the four great armchairs of ebony, covered with flowered damask (these last the spoils of some plundered chateau, evidently), they eyed curiously.

Just then, however, François Beaurain entered the chamber—his red cotton cap held obsequiously in one hand and his mouth extended in a smile of welcome.

"Pardon my delay in answering your summons, citizens. I was, saving your presence, when you arrived, busily engaged in cleaning the cow-stable."

Although he had left his sabots behind him in the kitchen, the odor which still clung to the garments of the worthy Maire attested to the truth of this statement of his.

The visitor in the maroon-colored overcoat answered with a grimace:

"Truce to excuses, Citizen Maire. I am Cincinnatus Geminel, President of the Committee of Public Safety in this Department, at your service. These men with me are my colleagues in office—Mémme *Hussenot*, Inspector of the District, and his assistant, Jean Jacques Ranlin. Good patriots, both of them. We have been sent here by the Committee to ask you for some information, which you, of course, as a patriot and citizen of the French Republic, will not refuse to accord us."

François Beaurain smiled doubtfully in reply as, half closing his small eyes, he surveyed his visitors from between their thick lids warily. After a slight pause he answered readily:

"At your service, citizens, at your service."

"You were well acquainted," continued his inquisitor, "with the *Sieur Lory, ci-devant Comte de Boisimon?*"

"I was his steward before the Revolution."

"I am not speaking of the father, who has fled the country, as is well known, but the son, called Antoine Lory de Boisimon, former student at the college of St. Supplice, but who, since the death of his elder brother, has become the heir to his father's estates."

"I knew the young man when I was in the count's service, but I have lost sight of him long ago. He will probably have joined his father in exile."

"You are misinformed there, Citizen Maire," Hussenot now interposed. "The son, Lory, has not quitted the country; of that we know certainly."

François Beaurain shrugged his shoulders with an air of indifference.

"It may be, citizen. I know nothing whatever——"

"You know," Geminel interrupted him here, savagely, "at least that the decree of the Convention of the Sixth Fructidor calls upon all young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five to enlist in the Army of the Republic. In not responding to this call of the nation, Antoine de Boisimon, born in 1769, and a single man, is in contumacy, and has put himself under the ban of the law. Besides being the son of a *ci-devant* and an emigré, he has, moreover, shown himself refractory in refusing to obey the decree of the Convention, and every patriot should make haste to denounce and, if possible, deliver him over to the law. You understand me?"

"Quite. But with all due deference to you, Mr. President, it is hard, as the proverb says, 'to comb a devil who has no hair.' How can I deliver up to you a man of whose whereabouts I am ignorant?"

"You lie," Ranlin burst out violently, then added, correcting himself, "at least, you are reported to have him concealed here on your premises."

The worthy Maire closed his little eyes to conceal the expression of satisfaction which leaped into them at these words of the deputies. "They are certain of nothing," he thought, relieved.

"Eh bien, citizens," he answered, smiling, "do you think the Maire of the Commune would conceal an aristocrat under his own roof?"

"If you have not hidden him, your wife might have done so without your knowing of it."

"I am not married. I live here alone with my servant; and Mère Anelle is not the one to conceal any one here without my knowledge of it."

These words were spoken in an accent of such sincerity that two of the deputies began to doubt the veracity of the reports they had received. Coco Jacquot, however, whispered to Geminel: "If you take my advice, citizen, you will search the house."

The other nodded meaningly, and said, turning to Beaurain: "I presume, Citizen Maire, you have no objection to our going over your house?"

"Not at all, Citizen Deputy. Search it from garret to cellar, from the granary to the cow-stable. But as sure as my name is François Beaurain, you'll find nothing for your pains." So speaking he bent down and, lighting a candle from the dying embers of the wood-fire (for the short day was drawing to a close and it had grown dark in the room), he added: "Where will you begin your search, Messieurs?"

He led them from the kitchen to the stable; from the stable they ascended to a chamber under the eaves, Mère Anelle's, evidently. Cupboards, wardrobes, a great old chest covered with dust in the garret were opened cheerfully for their inspection. At last Beaurain led his visitors to the cellar, allowed them to peer into wine-bins and behind casks and barrels, to sound the walls with their canes, and thrust their noses into every nook and cranny.

"You see, citizens," he said at last, when they stopped their search, weary and perspiring, "you see for yourselves that you have been misled by your informant. Now, however, that you are convinced no traitor, no 'suspect,' is hidden away under my roof, perhaps you will not refuse to pledge me a bottle to the health of the Republic." He took a cobwebbed bottle from a bin near by, the deputies following him up-stairs again rather shamefacedly. There Anelle, at her master's request, brought glasses, and the four seated themselves at a table in the room. Beaurain, after filling his guests' glasses and his own, exclaimed: "Your health, citizens; and long live the Republic."

"I drink to the emancipation of the human race," said Hussenot, solemnly clinking glasses with his host. "And I to the nation," cried Geminel, enthusiastically. Coco Jacquot, however,

swallowed his wine in silence. The bottle finished, the deputies prepared to take their departure. Beurain accompanied them to the door. "Adieu, Citizen Maire, do not let your zeal for your country's welfare flag. Steel you heart against all Federalists and aristocrats. It is only by severity and her offspring terror that we can exterminate the enemies of France within and without her gates," was Geminel's parting admonition to his entertainer. Hussenot, in his turn, added solemnly: "Be vigilant, the Commune is watching you."

They had by this time crossed the threshold of the door, which Beurain held open for them obsequiously. Here, however, Coco Jacquot turned back, laid his hand heavily on Beurain's shoulder and said suddenly:

"One word more, citizen. You have another house, have you not?"

"Unfortunately, I have not," returned the other with a forced smile.

"I have been told you had a house at *Vél*."

"The house you speak of is not mine, but my brother's—Beurain du Chânois—and it is not a house. It is a ruin," he continued laughingly, speaking this time in the patois of the district.

"*Veule-ve l'acheté?* (Would you like to buy it?) It would not take very much money to do it."

"No thank you. *Bonsoir*."

"Adieu, citizens. How dark it has grown. It will be late before you reach *Bar* again."

Beurain stood there some minutes looking after them thoughtfully. As soon, however, as their forms were lost in the darkness, he turned and went into the house again, closing the door carefully behind him. He went quickly up to the table and fumbled absently among the glasses with hands that trembled visibly. His face was strangely pale and disturbed when Mère Anelle entered presently with his supper. She set it down upon the table, and without addressing him returned to the kitchen. Left alone, Beurain quickly swallowed a mouthful or two, then pushing back his plate with a gesture of distaste, he got up from the table, changed his coat for a blouse, his shoes for a pair of sabots, opened a cupboard above the chimney-piece, and taking out of it a ham, a loaf of bread and a bottle of wine, he put them into a leather wallet, and taking up a thick, stout stick, crept quietly out of the house. He took the road leading toward *Vél*.



It led up a steep acclivity. He stepped quickly yet cautiously. When he reached the summit of the hill, he paused a moment to take breath and peer about him. A gray starlit sky charged with snow hung over the landscape. In the distance the lights of the houses of Véel glimmered dimly. After a short walk Beurain entered a little wood. The branches of the trees, thick with snow, shimmered dimly in the gray obscurity. The snow on the path creaked under his heavy footsteps. Leaving the wood behind him, he entered presently, through gates half torn from their hinges, an inclosure which had probably been a park belonging to a chateau formerly. The path here was choked with snow and bordered by high straggling hedges of box. It led up to a dilapidated building—the former stables of the castle. Here Beurain halted and looked and listened. There was no sign of life in the building. It had fallen down on one end and seemed uninhabited. There was not a sound to be heard or a light to be seen.

In a deep niche a low door was quite hidden away, only a person used to the place would have known of it. Beurain threw a handful of pebbles against the panels. In reply to this signal a light flickered out one moment. The next it was extinguished. Directly after, however, the door was opened cautiously. On Beurain's whispering, "It is I, Beurain," the light was struck again and the door flung wide open. The light revealed dimly, a low, long room with a ladder leading up to a loft above.

"Bonsoir, comrade," cried a gay young voice in greeting.

"For Heaven's sake, Monsieur, put out that lantern; who knows what spies may be lurking about here?"

In obedience to this request the light was again extinguished and the two scrambled up the ladder in the darkness. At the end of this loft was a small chamber looking out into a courtyard with high walls.

"Now," exclaimed Beurain, "you may light the lantern again, Monsieur."

The room was furnished with a bed of straw, a three-legged stool, and a small stand. On the stand an open book was lying. The place was cold and damp. The occupant of it, however, was wrapped from head to foot in a coarse woolen blanket.

"The first thing to do, Monsieur," said Beurain, opening his wallet, "is to eat your supper."

"It comes just in time," returned the other, gayly. "I am as hungry as a wolf."

"No wonder," replied the other, looking at him compassionately, "it is four-and-twenty hours since you have had bite or sup."

Lory de Boisimon, youngest son of the former President of the *Chambres de Comptes du Barrois*, was a young man about three-and-twenty. Those who had known him twelve months before, a pupil at the Seminary, would have had hard work to recognize him now. While in hiding his beard had grown. It encircled in its soft waves a narrow, pale face. The nose was aquiline, the eyes dark and smiling, the forehead high though narrow, the dark hair curling slightly at the temples. The fugitive had exchanged his cassock for a peasant's costume. His tall, slender figure was attired in a loose blouse of a coarse, dingy blue cloth, and wide, loose pantaloons of the same color and material. Although Lory de Boisimon had been educated for the priesthood, there was nothing ascetic or clerical in his appearance. As a younger son, he was destined from his birth for the vocation. The death of his older brother, however, had changed his destiny—he was now the heir to his father's estates and title. His prospects, however, of ever enjoying them were at this time very problematical. His father was an exile—he himself a proscribed and hunted fugitive.

Still the young man's spirits were not dashed nor his courage dampened by his dismal prospects. He was young—and youth is hopeful and careless of the future.

"Eat, M. le Comte," said Beurain, watching him closely. "You will have need of all your strength."

"Why do you look at me so compassionately?" inquired Anton, filling his cup for the second time with wine.

"A deputation of 'sans culottes' were seeking you at my house this evening. They suspect, moreover, you are hidden here. Coco Jacquot will egg his comrades on to search this place by daybreak to-morrow. You must leave here to-night."

"What a nuisance!" exclaimed the young man, smiling. "Just as I was getting to feel quite at home here. Wrapped up in my blanket I could lie curled up there on my cot and read my Horace in peace. Listen, Beurain, and tell me if these words of the old Latin poet do not fit my fortunes."

He stood up, and holding his glass above his head, declaimed:

“ ‘ Friends, companions, faithful in dangers untold,  
To day, beaker in hand, let us drink, caring for nought,  
Though to-morrow we fight against foes and fate.’ ”

“ Your health, friend François,” he added, draining his glass.

“ Monsieur le Comte,” remonstrated Beaurain, “ this is no time for spouting verse and wasting the precious minutes. Your skin and mine are to be saved. To-morrow Coco Jacquot, with his bloodhounds of the law at his heels, will be here seeking you. You must leave this place, and at once.”

“ But where the deuce am I to go? ”

“ I have been thinking about that on the way hither. There is but one place I know of—and that is under the very noses of the deputies. You remember, Monsieur, that when as a child you played hide and seek, the very safest place to hide in was the one nearest the seeker.”

“ Well? ”

“ You must go with me to the chateau yonder and get the concière to hide you.”

“ Justin Curel? ”

“ Yes. You remember that he, like me, was a former servant of your father’s, and, like me, devoted to him.”

“ But think of it, Beaurain, the Committee of Public Safety holds its sittings daily in the Hall of Audience in the chateau. It seems to me that for me to seek shelter there, will be like leaping from the jungle into the tiger’s open jaws.”

“ Not so. Who would ever dream of looking there. Justin Curel’s reputation as a patriot is above reproach.”

“ Very well. Let us be off.”

So speaking, the young man drew on his gaiters, pocketed his Horace, flung his hat on his head and wrapped his blanket more closely around his shoulders.

Beaurain, in his turn, cleared the table and extinguished the lamp. The two then groped their way down the ladder in the darkness, and out of doors. The air outside was cold and still. A clock in a church-tower struck ten. “ Ten o’clock,” muttered Beaurain. “ If we walk fast we can reach the chateau before the Curels will have gone to bed.”

He decided, however, it would not be prudent, late as it was, to follow the road thither, and they took a short cut across the fields to their destination.

On reaching the chateau, Beaurain pulled the gate-bell loudly—once, twice—in vain. At the third peal the great door was

opened cautiously, and the huge, shock-head of a man thrust out.

"What!" exclaimed this personage, after a moment's examination, "is it you, Père Beurain, at this hour of the night?"

Beurain laid a thick forefinger on his lips. "Hush!" he whispered. Then—"Are you alone here; Curel?"

"Yes, except for my wife and daughter."

"Thank heaven," he continued, entering the hall as he spoke. "I have brought a visitor with me. Some one you must hide away here—Monsieur Antoine de Boisimon." The concierge shook his huge head doubtfully. Beurain continued, persuasively: "The deputies came to my house to-day to look for him. To-morrow they will be sure to seek him at Vée. The son of our former master has not a place but this to lay his head in."

"Well, well, it is a bad business. I wish you had brought him anywhere but here. But as he is here—— Call him in, Beurain."

When the young man stepped over the threshold in response to Beurain's summons, the concierge welcomed him with a low bow and the words, "Monsieur de Boisimon, welcome to my roof. My quarters are small, but we will do what we can to shelter you in them."

"Thank you, Curel; a thousand thanks for your kindness." Then turning to Beurain, he caught him in his arms and embraced him, saying: "God bless you, Beurain, for your goodness to me these many weeks."

"Do not stand chattering here," interrupted Mons. Curel, impatiently. "Come up-stairs; we will be quite undisturbed there."

"No, no," replied Beurain. "I must be off. I do not want Mère Anelle to know that I have been away from home this night. Open the door, Curel. Good-night, Monsieur le Comte."

Lantern in hand, Justin Curel led the way up the broad stone staircase and into a corridor which led into a small apartment whose windows looked out into an inclosed court.

In the *salle à manger*, near a huge green porcelain stove, sat Madame Curel and her daughter, Rosette, engaged in sewing by the light of a small lamp. Madame Curel, a woman of five-and-forty, still bore traces of former beauty. Her eyes were bright

and dark, her hair black, her figure slight and graceful. Rosette, her daughter, was a youthful, blooming likeness of her mother. She was small and slight, with a fresh, bright complexion, heavy curling dark hair, and soft brown eyes.

"*Ma femme*," began Justin, speaking slowly and impressively, "this gentleman is the son of the former *Seigneur*, Monsieur de Boisimon, who will remain here with us a few days." Madam Curel bowed hesitatingly, Rosette opened her brown eyes wide in astonishment. "Monsieur Antoine," continued Curel, "is at present obliged to conceal himself from his enemies. For that reason he has honored our poor house by his presence. Let a chamber be got ready for him immediately."

Madame Curel, in obedience to this request of her husband's, opened a wardrobe, and taking some linen and blankets out of it, left the room, her arms piled up with linen. Rosette, who had until then remained standing, reseated herself and went on with her sewing. Their guest drew a chair up to the stove and basked in its pleasant warmth. It had been weeks since he had seen the light of a fire.

"You must have passed," remarked his host to him compassionately, "many a weary day, many an uneasy night."

"It was the cold I hated most," returned the other. "The cold and the darkness. For I did not dare to keep my light lit much. I was obliged to sleep with one eye open and be content with a meal every other night. If, however, I get away safely, it will be a pleasure to look back on the dangers I have escaped. I never appreciated a good fire until lately."

Madame Curel coming back to announce the chamber was ready, put a stop to the conversation. Boisimon's eyes were closing for weariness. He declined his host's offer of supper, and bidding his hostess and her daughter good-night, followed Curel to the room got ready for him with alacrity. "You will have to go to bed in the dark, Monsieur Boisimon, as this part of the chateau is not supposed to be occupied."

The next morning Antoine de Boisimon, who had arisen, and, with his blanket drawn over his knees, was busily translating some verses out of his Horace, was disturbed by a gentle knock at the door. Directly after it opened and Rosette entered, leaving his breakfast on a tray.

She was a beautiful apparition to the eyes of the fugitive, who, wearied out the night before, had hardly noticed her. She wore

a short gown of flowered chintz over a blue petticoat. On the top of her dark, curly hair, drawn up from her forehead, was set a jaunty little cap, with cherry colored ribbons. Setting down the tray on a little three-legged stand, she explained to him that as her father was in attendance at the lodge and her mother had gone to market, there was no one else left in the house to wait upon him.

"Thank you, Mademoiselle. I really need no breakfast at all, feasting my eyes, as I do, on so much beauty."

Rosette blushed and smilingly inquired :

"You slept well, Monsieur ?"

"Perfectly, and my brain is so clear after my night's rest that I have gone to work to translate a stanza or two from my beloved Horace, the companion, friend and comforter of my wanderings."

"Verses—you write verses?" she inquired, looking at him admiringly.

"Well," he answered, smiling doubtfully, "I attempt now and then to do so. Have I Mademoiselle's permission to read her what I have written this morning?"

"Oh, if you only would," she responded, highly flattered by this proposal of his.

Antoine, taking up his tablets, began :

"Behold, the tops of the mountains snow-laden,  
 And the pines bending their branches 'neath the weight of the snow.  
 Frozen the river, and the fountain ice-bound ;  
 The brooklet wrapped, too, in an icy shroud.  
 Then heap high great logs on the fire,  
 And bask in' the leaping, glowing flames,  
 Which shoot skyward and crackle and dance,  
 Stretch we our weary limbs out and bask in the warmth ;  
 Quaff the red wine that glows in our beakers,  
 Throw care away and leave our fates with the gods,  
 Who hold in closed palms the future of mortals.  
 Each day of rest, to us a boon and a blessing.  
 Crown we our heads now with wreaths and with garlands ;  
 Drink deep of the cup held to our lips by Fortune,  
 And press to our hearts the hand held out to ours in greeting.  
 Flee after her who flees but to be pursued ;  
 Whose gay laughter betrays to her pursuer her hiding-place.  
 She who rests, panting, in the arms which encircle her ;  
 Press kisses on the mouth, half averted, but smiling."

Here he paused suddenly, fascinated by the rapt attention of his listener, who, with eyes alight and hands clasped in her lap, was drinking down his words.

"How beautiful!" she murmured artlessly.

Poor Rosette! Her reading had been limited to the heavy

cumbrous romances of the day, and she was a listener to be envied by any verse-maker.

"Do you write much?" she inquired again.

"Ah," he sighed, "though the sans-culottes have been at my heels for the last month, yet I have managed to scribble a little very day. Would the gentlemen only leave me in peace long enough to cross the frontier. I could find a quiet corner there, where I might write my silly rhymes in peace. But how to get out of France—and without a passport——"

"I will get you a passport," interrupted Rosette eagerly.

"You, Mademoiselle; and how, may I ask?"

"I know how. You must, however, allow me to keep that a secret for the present." She took up the tray from the stand, and continued, "You know to-morrow will be St. Catharine's day, and we girls are used to dress up the youngest among us in the garb of the saint and go from house to house collecting gifts."

"Saint Catharine's day! How well I remember it! And the little Saint Catharine, dressed in white and crowned with roses, who always came to us into the drawing-room to recite the piece which the curé had written for her. But——"

"To-morrow we are going to send a child dressed as the saint into the hall where the deputies will be in session. Geminel is no longer with them. He has set off for Verdun. He is the only stranger among them and the only one we had to fear. The vice-president, Hussenot, is at heart a kind man, in spite of the ferocious airs of a sans-culotte he has taken upon himself lately. And I hope to get a passport for you from him by means of our pretty little St. Catharine."

"But," objected Antoine, "you will have to give a full description of the person for whom you wish the passport. Also, you will be obliged to tell what is to be done with it."

"That is my secret," she answered mischievously, turning to leave the room.

"You are an angel!" he exclaimed, following her; "an angel of beauty and goodness."

She waved him back with a little hand that trembled visibly, and murmuring "Be prudent, and all will be well," hurried out of the room.

The Committee of Public Safety of the Department of Bare held its sittings in the great council chamber of Château Comptes

du Barróis. Houses, like men and books, have often strange destinies. This old castle had formerly had as inmates within its walls Francis II. with his consort Mary Stewart and the gay court of Lorraine; and where Ronsard here composed his madrigals and epithalamiums, the walls now resounded to Geminel's thundering perorations and the oaths of Coco Jacquot and his confrères.

The 23d of November, 1793 (3d Frimaire, year 2 of the Republic) was a dim, gray day. Snow lay on the peaked roof, turrets and nooks and embrasures of the chateau. The window panes, covered with snow, let but a spare light into the huge hall, hung with heavy draperies of Flanders tapestry. Some dingy plaster busts of the day's celebrities were ranged here and there on columns—Lepelletier, Saint Farpan, Marets. Behind the President's desk was a painted cartoon, bearing in huge blood-red letters on its surface the motto, "Liberty or Death."

In the absence of Cincinnatus Geminel, Hussenet sat in the President's chair. The Public Accuser, and the Commandant of the National Guards, sat one at his right hand the other at the left.

Coco Jacquot, at a desk a little distance off, was occupied, with a frowning face, in examining a pile of documents. The other members of the Council were grouped around a table covered with green baize.

"Citizens," announced the President, arising from his chair solemnly, "I will now read you a document just received from our worthy President, Citizen Geminel."

"'I must advise you,' he writes, 'that the friends, relatives and supporters of the aristocrats and Federalists are swarming here in your midst. The Convention at Paris has been written to on the subject of these malcontents and traitors.'"

"That reminds me," Coco Jacquot interrupted him here very unceremoniously, "to inform the Committee that our search for the suspected and denounced Boisimon (son of an exile and an aristocrat himself) has been in vain. In my opinion the Maire of the District, Beurain himself, has aided and abetted this fugitive, but unfortunately we have no proof that he has done so. Beurain owns a house—a stable rather—in Vél. For a month past lights, late at night, have been visible in this building. The foolish and superstitious villagers insist, however, that it is haunted, and a thorough search of the place early



yesterday morning revealed no trace of its being inhabited lately."

Just then a noise of the rustling of gowns and whisperings were audible outside in the corridor. The great door was pushed open with difficulty and Rosette with three other young girls, having a child dressed in white and crowned with roses in their midst, appeared before the astonished Council.

"St. Catharine has come to pay you a visit, gentlemen," announced Rosette calmly.

"Away with you and your Saints," screamed an angry deputy.

"No females allowed in here," cried Coco Jacquot shaking his fist rudely. "Out with you or——"

The girls fled affrighted. In the corridor, Rosette's companions turned on her angrily.

"I told you they would have nothing to do with us," said Claudine, the oldest of them, reproachfully.

"No matter, we will go to them again and this time they will surely receive us," Rosette reassured them.

A quarter of an hour later the deputies were again disturbed at their sitting. But not by Saint Catherine this time. The ingenious Rosette had transformed her representative, herself and her companions into Goddesses of Liberty. All had tri-colored sashes around their waists and red caps on their heads.

"Citizens," said Rosette, coquettishly, "you will not drive away Liberty from your doors as you did Saint Catherine just now."

A burst of applause welcomed the girl's speech. Rosette and her companions were received with enthusiasm.

Hussenot, in particular, seemed quite carried away by Rosette, who, in her tri-colored ribbon and jaunty red cap set sideways on her dark, curly head, really looked bewitching.

"Sit here by me," he commanded her. Taking her little hand in his thick, coarse fingers, he bent his head and kissed it rapturously.

"If," he continued, whilst the other girls were laughing and jesting with his colleagues, "if you would only sing us the Carmagnole now, I would fill your pockets with *assignats* to buy cakes and wine with which to drink to the health of the Republic."

"Thanks, citizen," returned Rosette, looking modestly downwards. "We did not come here to beg money of you. And I will sing you the Carmagnole cheerfully, if in return you would do me a favor."

"And what is that, my dear child?"

"I should like a passport from you, citizen."

"A passport!" returned the deputy, sternly, recovering his dignity suddenly. "And for whom do you require a passport, citizenship?"

"For my sweetheart, Pierre Drouin, a soldier of the army of the Haute-Marne. He was badly wounded at Wattignes, and, whilst he was lying wounded at an inn, his money and passport were stolen from him. He must have a passport to rejoin his regiment at Moselle. I, too, should like to go with him on his way as far as Longuyon."

"Hum—he is a soldier, has fought for the Republic, you say—and has been wounded. Well—well—you are so charming that I—But I must see him first, this sweetheart of yours. Can you bring him to me after the sitting is over? If he answers the questions I shall put to him satisfactorily, why, then, we will see about this passport."

"Thanks—a thousand thanks! And the Carmagnole, shall I sing it now for you, citizen?"

"Not now. We are behindhand with our business. One's duty to one's country before everything else. *Au revoir*. Bring your sweetheart here to me in an hour."

Shaking off her companions unceremoniously, Rosette flew to the chamber where Antoine was hidden.

"Good heavens! what have you been doing to yourself?" he exclaimed, opening wide his eyes at the sight of her.

"I am a Goddess of Liberty, if you please," she returned, with a courtesy. "But," she added quickly, "I am to have your passport."

"Really? You are, then, not only an angel, it seems, but an enchantress."

"I was obliged to tell a story—a horrid fib—to get the passport," continued Rosette, blushing up to her eyes and in a very faint voice. "I—I—said you were my—my—sweetheart."

Antoine smiled. "Upon my honor, I could not have been more highly honored."

"Do not jest, but listen," she interrupted him. "You are still in great danger. The vice-president, Hussenet, has asked to see you before he will give me the passport. If he should recognize you——"

"Have no fear; he has never seen me, and the descriptions of my person which have been placarded about do not now

resemble me. My beard has grown since then, and gaunt and weatherbeaten as I now am, I find it hard to recognize my own image when it confronts me in the looking-glass."

"Well, then, do not forget that your name is *Pierre Drouin*, soldier of the Republic." And she made him repeat over and over again, like a child learning a lesson, the tale she had just before told the deputy.

She also fetched for him an uniform of blue cloth with facings and trimmings of red, like that worn by the common soldiers, and bade him dress himself in it and be ready in an hour to go with her to the council chamber.

At the appointed time Rosette, leading Antoine by the hand, appeared before Hussenot, who sat alone in his chair of state awaiting them. The day was declining and two lamps had been lighted, which illuminated only a small space in the great, gloomy hall. Rosette, taking care to stand in the shadow, presented her companion to the vice-president :

"Citizen President, this is my sweetheart, whom I spoke to you about."

The great man surveyed the young couple gravely.

"You are, then, Rosette's sweetheart. Lucky dog, I envy you! And you have been wounded in the service of the Republic. But how did you happen to lose your papers?"

"I have an idea," Boisimon answered hardily, "that they were taken by some aristocrat who wished to fly the country."

"Probably. And so you mean to marry Rosette when the war shall be over and France victorious over her enemies? And you will not have to wait long, let me tell you. The Vendéans have been crushed by Kleber, Hoche is driving Brunswick before him. In a short time the country will be purged from invaders and traitors." Hussenot, taking off his cap, raised it aloft, with the words, "Vive la République!"

There was so much of dignity in his words and gesture that Boisimon was touched in spite of himself. He pressed the Jacobin's hand cordially, which the latter held out to him.

"Here is your passport, my children," continued Hussenot, filling out a blank hastily. "Be faithful—be constant to each other, and when the war is over, I will marry you myself here in this Hall, before the Altar of Agriculture. And now let me see you, before you leave me, exchange the embrace of betrothal." However, as Rosette and Boisimon hesitated to obey this command of his, he added, impatiently: "Well, well;

why do you hesitate? It is not the first time you have kissed each other, I am sure of it."

And Hussenot smiled paternally as Antoine, placing his arm around Rosette's slender waist, imprinted a kiss upon her fresh, red lips. Flushed and trembling they directly afterwards left the presence of the Deputy.

The next morning at four o'clock Antoine and Rosette set out on their journey towards the frontier. They took their places in a canvas-covered cart. The driver of this vehicle was Nicholas Chartel, Rosette's foster-brother. Rosette was wrapped in a pelisse of gray cloth, the hood of which was drawn up over her head. At one side of this hood a cockade of tri-colored ribbons was attached. Antoine wore a greatcoat of sheepskin and a red bonnet, a great sword dangled from his side.

Day broke after they had entered the forest of Traves. The rays of the low sun gave a rosy tinge to the snowy landscape; the branches of the tall pine-trees, ice and snow laden, glittered rosily in the sun's rays.

"Look!" exclaimed Antoine, suddenly, "the forest is smiling and blushing as you did yesterday when I gave you the kiss of betrothal before the worthy Deputy of the Commune."

"Chut," she answered impatiently. "Do not remind me of what I did yesterday. You must promise never to think of it again."

"I cannot promise you that, Rosette. Come what may, I shall always think of your goodness to me, and bless and thank you for it. And the kiss——"

"Never speak of it again!" she exclaimed, with a flaming face, "or I leave you to go on your way alone."

"Forgive me," he answered, penitently.

For some time there was silence between them, then Rosette began to question him of his past life. Antoine confessed that though he had been educated for a priest, he had had no liking for the vocation. The days passed at the seminary had been dreary ones to him. He much preferred the life he had led lately—the life of a hunted fugitive, hidden away in barns and ruined dwellings, not knowing where the next meal was to come from. Then in his turn he asked his companion of her life. But Rosette had not much to tell. She had been educated in a convent. For the last two years, however, she had been at home, assisting her mother with the sewing and the housework. On holidays in spring and summer she went

walking in the fields with her young companions; in the winter they met occasionally at one another's homes, to dance and play games.

While they were talking they entered the village of Souilly. There they stopped for breakfast and to bait their horses.

On resuming their journey, they found their way lay across a desolate, flat country, glittering with snow. Long flights of crows were visible high up above their heads. Not a sound broke the stillness but the cawing of these birds.

It was to these two young creatures as though they were alone together in the world. They could only catch a glimpse of the driver of the cart, sitting stolid and motionless in front. Rosette's heart was beating high. Antoine's lips were very near her blushing cheek. She felt, without looking, how admiringly his bold, bright eyes gazed on her downcast face. She began to grow uneasy, and to wish for some one to put an end to this companionship. It was with a sigh of relief that before twilight approached she perceived that they were entering Damvilliers. When the cart drew up at the barrier, and while their passport was being examined by the official, she there approached Nicholas and told him of her resolution to go on with them no further. She would await at Damvilliers the return of her foster-brother and the cart. The moon had arisen—a slender, crescent moon. As Antoine came up to her smiling, she said, seriously :

“Monsieur de Boisimon, you are now only five leagues from the frontier. My foster-brother will drive you thither and return here for me.”

“What!” he exclaimed, reproachfully. “You will accompany me no farther on my journey?”

“Yes,” she answered, softly. “My journey ends here. But you can have perfect confidence in Nicholas. By driving fast you will reach Torquy by midnight, and but a short distance from Luxembourg in Belgium.”

“Oh!” he exclaimed, impetuously. “What do I care for safety, for life itself, without you? Why should we part? Life is short. Its happy hours few and far between. Let us spend them together. Do you forget that we are betrothed, and that Hussenot himself has promised to marry us, when the war is over, before the Altar of Agriculture.”

There was a suspicion of raillery in his tones which struck like ice on the girl's glowing heart. She drew back. In her dark eyes reproach and sorrow were visible,

"No," she answered, turning away from him. "We part now, Monsieur le Comte—and for ever. A happy, a safe journey to you—and adieu."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, penetrated with remorse at his ingratitude. "Do not leave me in this way. Forgive me. Let me tell you before we part how I respect you—how grateful I am to you. Allow me to salute you—once more to salute as I would a dear, a cherished sister."

All color had fled from her cheeks and lips as she bent her head to receive upon her forehead the kiss he imprinted upon it solemnly. Murmuring softly, "Adieu, monsieur," she turned and entered in at the inn door.

He, however, hastened to follow her. "One moment. I have one more favor still to ask of you." He drew his copy of Horace from his waistcoat pocket and held it out towards her. "Take this, I beg of you, as a souvenir of him whose life you have saved."

"Thank you," she murmured, with tearful eyes, "but how can I deprive you of this friend, this companion of yours in all your wanderings and dangers."

"Take it, I implore you. If I return to France again you can give it back to me. *Adieu, adieu*, dear, dear Rosette."

Antoine de Boisimon reached Austria in safety, and joined the army of Lorraine there. He never returned to France, however, but married an Austrian heiress about five years after leaving his native land.

Rosette married, too—a marriage of convenience. She married the young man who succeeded her father as conciergé of the chateau.

Carefully locked away in one of her escritaires she kept the copy of Horace, with its cover of red morrocco and crest emblazoned in gold. She never showed it to any one—not even her husband—and Antoine de Boisimon's name never crossed her lips.

When alone, however, she would sometimes take out with trembling, cold fingers, the little volume he had given her, and it seemed to her as if the blue eyes of Antoine smiled up at her from the pages, of which she could not read a word. Again she was hand in hand with him in the great Hall of Audience; again they stood together before the deputy, Hussenot; again she felt on her lips Antoine's kiss of betrothal. And the love, born again during the days of the Terror, stirred and warmed again her heart—grew cold and stony in a *marriage de convenance*.

## THE KINDNESS OF THE CELESTIAL\*

BY BARRY PAIN.

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His real name was Cyprian Langsdyke, but that would have struck anyone as being far too much of a name for the boy. He had a quaint Chinese look, due to his bright, narrow eyes, and in consequence he was generally known at Desford as The Celestial. He was much more athletic than he looked; was reputed to be clever but whimsical, and known to be unruly. He was in the fifth, and just at present he was in a bad temper, for things had been going exceedingly wrong with The Celestial.

He was seated on the stack of hot-water pipes in the hall of the School House. At his back were the screens on which school notices were posted. Around him were certain sympathetic friends. The Celestial had just expressed, in simple language, a wish that he was dead, and had been asked for his reasons.

"I never get any luck nowadays; look at that." He pointed to a football list on the screens. "Peter Hill playing half in my place, and me stuck in the scrum. Oh, yes, I'd expected that. I shall be kicked out altogether, to-morrow; that's a bit of Tommy Hill's captaining, that is. I knew he'd give Peter a lift; I wonder he hasn't asked his blooming mother to play. However, I don't want any favoring; I want ordinary justice—not family influence, but ordinary justice. And you don't get that from Tommy Hill, nor from the old man, nor from Henry Reginald Liggers, M. A.—more especially Liggers. I have had a day with Liggers. I was about two seconds late for morning prep.—row with Liggers. Then, when we got to work, I saw that fat-head Smithson asleep on the other side of the table. So I spilt my ink, calculating that, the way the table sloped, it would run across and pour over Smithson, and wake him up. Liggers copped me; he didn't even take the trouble to ask why I'd spilt it—simply a hundred Greek with accents. Going in to breakfast, I had a slight accident, and fell up against Lig-

\* A selection from "The Idler."

gers, and he called me a clumsy lout. Morning school, he made me construe three-quarters of the Livy all to my own cheek, and never put on Douglas, nor Banks, nor that fat-head Smithson at all; finding he couldn't kill me on the Livy, he tore up my prose and told me to do it again. In the afternoon at footer he amused himself by scragging me, and hacking me, and saying I was off-side when I wasn't."

"He can't play much," said Banks, meaning to be sympathetic, but speaking inadvisedly.

"You complete chump!" replied The Celestial, scornfully. "Of course he can play. He captained his college team, and he's better than any of the other masters by a long chalk. There's no sense in saying that he can't play footer, but he spites me. Coming up from footer, he saw me come out of Hunley's, so he said: 'You're always in there, Langsdyke, eating buns and chocolate, and trash of that kind; you'll ruin your wind.' I wasn't going to explain to him, but, as a matter of fact, I hadn't been eating anything. I'd just had four bottles of ginger beer, and that was all—not another thing. Then in afternoon school he sent me out of the room for blowing my nose."

The Smithson to whom The Celestial had made uncomplimentary allusions giggled reminiscently. "I own it made a row," continued The Celestial, with an air of judicial fairness. "I don't deny it; but I didn't do it on purpose. I never know when it's going to make that row and when it isn't. And now it's Liggers's prep., and I'm bound to get dropped on again. Don't I wish I was in the sixth, and had a study to myself? You can get your work done in three-quarters of an hour, and then you have the other half of prep. all to yourself, to read novels in. It's beastly working in that day-room with Liggers or some other master looking on all the time. You don't get a chance to—to do anything. However, if Liggers is going to be rough on me, I'll be rough on him. There's the prep. bell; so now for breezes!"

The little group dispersed. During preparation that night there were more than breezes—there were hurricanes. The Celestial retired to his cubicle at ten resigned and philosophical. There were two big dormitories in the School House at Desford, each containing twenty cubicles. The partitions which formed the cubicles were about seven feet high, and did not nearly reach to the ceiling, so conversation was possible, and was permitted until the lights were put out at half-past ten.



"I'm going to give up being hard on Liggers," remarked The Celestial from his cubicle to the rest of the lower dormitory. "It's played out. A master can call you an idiot, and you can't call him anything back again; so he has the bulge. It's no use being at war with Liggers. I'm going on a different line."

"What are you going to do?" inquired Smithson from the next cubicle. Smithson, generally addressed as "fat-head," was of the good-natured, fat, indolent, rather stupid type. He was entirely devoted to The Celestial, to whom he stood in the position of a humble serf.

"I'm going to try kindness. Now dry up, because I'm writing my lines, and the gas will be out directly."

When the gas was put out, The Celestial removed the counterpane and one blanket from his bed, and lay down. He was in consequence only just warm enough to be able to go to sleep and he calculated quite rightly that in a couple of hours the cold would wake him. The cold acted as a silent alarm. As soon as he was awake, he got out of bed and looked out of window. He was pleased to find that all the lights were out in the master's wing of the house. Then he produced from his chest of drawers a bull's-eye lantern, which he lit and placed so that it would illuminate the head of his bed. On the chair by his bedside he put his Homer, his writing-case and two ink-pots. Then he put on a football jersey, an ulster, and a dressing-gown, and, sitting up in bed, began to write lines, taking the writing-case and the Homer on his knee. He wrote these lines in the highest style of calligraphy. Greek looks very beautiful when it is beautifully written, and The Celestial looked upon his performance, when he had finished, with the eye of an artist. He numbered every fifth line in red ink, and wrote the following note at the head of the first page:

"N. B.—These lines have been *correctly* numbered, in order to facilitate counting.—C. LANGSDYKE."

He could think of nothing else which would make the imposition look more artistic, so he got out of bed, put away his writing things, ate two cranberry tarts which he had brought from Hunley's to assist him in his midnight toil, and turned out the lantern. Then he went back again to bed, and slept like a tired dog.

Yet was Mr. Liggers not contented with that imposition. "If I ever get any of this red-ink foolery from you again," he remarked, "you'll have to re-write—understand that, please." The

Celestial sighed the sigh of Christian resignation, and as Mr. Liggers was going out politely opened the door for him.

That morning in school Mr. Liggers happened to crumple up a corrected prose in his hand and aim it at the waste-paper basket. It just missed. The fifth were down at their desks at the time. The Celestial rose from his place, stepped softly across the class-room, picked up the little ball of paper, and carefully placed it in the very centre of the waste-paper basket. Then he looked round the room with perfect gravity, and returned to his seat. The politeness was so excessive, so abnormal, and in The Celestial so singularly unexpected, that the fifth suffered—suffered badly from enforced suppression of their feelings. For a second or two the strict silence of the class-room continued, and then came a faint gurgling sound as of one pouring water out of a bottle. It stopped abruptly, and an observer might have noticed that Smithson had gone purple in the face. Then the gurgling sound began again; it came quicker, and louder and louder. Mr. Liggers looked up from the prose that he was correcting, and requested Smithson and Langsdyke to go out of the room.

“We’ve done it now,” said Smithson; “I wonder what he’ll do.”

“*You’ve* done it,” said The Celestial. “I was only carrying out my plan, and being polite to him. What did you laugh for?”

“If I hadn’t laughed,” said Smithson sadly, “I believe I should have broken something inside me. It’s awful. I never want to laugh except when I don’t want to, and then I have to.”

“Well,” said The Celestial, “I’m going on being kind to that man. It’s sure to move him in the end. Then he’ll be sorry. I wonder if he likes cocoanuts.”

“Most people do. Where are you going to get them?”

“Market-place. There’s a man comes in on Saturdays, and you have shies at them.”

“But the Market-place is out of bounds.”

“I never said I wouldn’t break *any* rules, fat-head. It’s only Liggers I’m favoring.”

“All right, I’m on,” said Smithson. “If we’re copped, we’re copped,” he added, fatalistically.

They were informed at the end of the morning that punishment was deferred; it might be modified, or even altogether averted, by good behavior.

"That's Liggers all over," Smithson remarked. "He leaves things hanging over your head, and just when you think he's forgotten all about it, he drops down on you."

"You wait till I've done with him," said The Celestial. "I've got an idea that he was ill-treated when he was young, and he doesn't understand kindness at present—but I shall bring him round all right."

On the Saturday morning which followed, Mr. Liggers put The Celestial on to translate Virgil. Now The Celestial had taken particular trouble with his translation the night before, and on the rare occasion when The Celestial took trouble it became evident that he was a youth of some considerable promise. He had the beginnings of a poetical taste in him, of which he was very sincerely ashamed. His translation was not a marvelously brilliant piece of work, but it was good. He had a notion of style, and he had followed his master's example in translating Virgil into simple, rather archaic and biblical English. Mr. Liggers let him go on until he had translated the whole lesson, and then said icily: "Thank you—that will do." He gave The Celestial full marks for the translation, however; and Mr. Liggers very rarely gave full marks. But The Celestial had no means of discovering what marks he had got, and in any case would have preferred a word or two of praise.

"That was an awful swagger construe of yours," remarked the sympathetic Banks to The Celestial afterwards, "but Liggers didn't say much, did he?"

Before The Celestial could reply, Mr. Liggers touched him on the shoulder and asked him if he would play fives. Now fives was the game at which The Celestial particularly excelled, and Mr. Liggers was rather a new hand at it. But The Celestial thanked him, and presently they met at the fives-courts. Mr. Liggers won the first game easily, and looked suspicious. He was winning the second rather more easily when he stopped suddenly:

"We'll finish this some time when you aren't sulking, Langsdyke. I don't want any of your condescensions. When I want you to let me win I'll tell you."

The Celestial said nothing, but politely handed Mr. Liggers his coat. In taming Mr. Liggers it was obvious that considerable patience would be necessary.

"Fat-head," said The Celestial, when he had found the devoted Smithson, "meet me after footer at Dow's Lane, and we'll

go for those cocoanuts. I'm going to give him three days' more kindness; he's trying, but I may get him in hand yet." Dow's Lane was the short cut to the Market-place; both were out of bounds, and Dow's Lane was a peculiarly unsavory, unsanitary, disease-producing place. But Smithson never thought of refusing; where his great patron The Celestial went, Smithson followed like a faithful dog.

Late that afternoon the two returned from their expedition. The Celestial walked a little in advance—radiant, triumphant; behind him came the humble Smithson, bearing four cocoanuts—won by The Celestial at a cost of fivepence.

"There's one for you, fat-head," remarked The Celestial when they had got up to the School House, "and one for me, and two for a peace-offering on the altar of Liggers. Go and borrow Douglas's gimlet, and get the gravy out of the inwards of our two. I'm going up-stairs to Liggers's study with the peace-offering."

"He *is* such a corker, you know," remarked Smithson to Douglas, when The Celestial had disappeared. "I'm blest if I know whether he's rotting Liggers or whether he isn't. But, my word, he can shy! Four in five shots isn't so dusty."

The Celestial found Mr. Liggers in his study, and remarked gravely that he had brought him two cocoanuts. Mr. Liggers almost smiled, and his manner approached geniality.

"Come now, Langsdyke, that's very good of you, but you mustn't let me deprive the senior day-room of its desirable indigestion. Suppose you leave one of them, and take the other away with you. Where did you get them?"

The question was not in the least inquisitorial; Mr. Liggers had expected that the answer would be, "At Hunley's." The dialogue which followed illustrates the state of The Celestial's ethics, which were erratic, but had something rather fine about them.

"I shied for them in the Market-place, sir." The Celestial would never lie to save himself.

The geniality vanished at once from Mr. Liggers's manner. "You know that the Market-place is out of bounds. Which way did you go to it?"

"By Dow's Lane, sir."

"Which also is out of bounds?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did any one go with you?"

"No." The Celestial would always lie to save any one else.

"Not Smithson?"

"No, sir, I went alone."

"Take these things away. I will tell you on Monday afternoon what your punishment will be; you have broken a most important rule. You have gone a little too far this time. I am sorry for you, but I am afraid that this will mean expulsion. Now go away."

The Celestial went down again to the day-room, where he found Smithson and some others engaged in extracting the milk from the nuts with a gimlet.

"Cocoanuts are cheap to-day," observed The Celestial. "Liggers can't eat them; they're too rich for his poor stomach. So he bade me bestow them on the bilious Banks and the debilitated Douglas. Give me to drink of the gravy of the coconut." He seemed to be in particularly high and whimsical spirits, and drained the tooth-mug proffered to him with a fine melodramatic air. "Now, then," he said, "I've got three blessed shillings. Let us go to Hunley's and drink and eat cranberry tarts, for the day after to-morrow we die—at least I do."

Smithson knew there was something wrong, and privately inquired what it was.

"I fancy," said The Celestial meditatively, "that I've about come to the end of the string, and now you can dry up, fat-head. You'll hear all the rest of it soon enough."

But late on the Sunday evening following, moved perhaps by the sentimentality inspired by the music of the evening service and the lateness of the hour, he told the faithful Smithson everything. "For myself," he said, "I don't care. With Tommy Hill to captain the footer and Liggers to make your life miserable in the fifth, the sooner I'm out of Desford the better. But my people will be sick—that's what I'm thinking about."

"Look here," said Smithson, half angrily, "I won't stand it. I—I'm damned if I want to get off and see you sacked. I was in it every bit as much as you were, and I'm going to say so."

"If you say one single word about it," answered The Celestial, "I'll just punch your fat head off, and never speak to you again. Dry up and keep quiet and do as you're told."

When on Monday afternoon Mr. Liggers came downstairs with bad news for The Celestial, he found the boy seated on the stack of hot-water pipes and wrapped up in two overcoats.

"Langsdyke," he said coldly, "I have considered your case,

and I see no reason for treating you with any leniency. I shall therefore——” He stopped suddenly, as he saw the boy's flushed face and feverish eyes. “Why,” he asked, in quite a different voice, “what's the matter with you, Langsdyke? Are you ill?”

“It isn't anything, sir,” answered The Celestial, a little excitedly. “It's just an ordinary sort of a cold. I'm shivering one moment and swea—awfully hot the next, and my head aches fit to split. Couldn't I take out my punishment in canings, sir, or partly canings and partly lines? I don't want to beg off anything, only, you see, it's not so much me as the mater that'll feel it if I——”

Mr. Liggers interrupted him, and he had lost all his beautiful, magisterial manner: “That's all right, old man, don't you fret yourself. You're not going to be expelled. Now run off to the sick-room at once, and say I sent you; and don't dream of coming to school this afternoon. We'll forget all about that punishment, I think; I'm sorry you're ill.”

The Celestial thanked him, and climbed up-stairs to the sick-room. “I'm bad, Mrs. Carter,” he said to the matron, “and Liggers says I'm to stop here.” And then this curious youth, who would have received the news of his expulsion with dry eyes, bent his head in his hands, and burst into tears.

“Poor dear!” said the motherly Mrs. Carter, “you *must* be ill to take on like that.”

In the meantime Mr. Liggers, who knew something of the condition of Dow's Lane, had hurried off to fetch a doctor. On the following day the rest of the school knew that The Celestial was ill with scarlet fever, and had been removed to the sanatorium.

On the following night, in Mr. Liggers's sitting-room, the mathematical master, Mr. Dunham, was giving Mr. Liggers a piece of his mind.

“I tell you I was in the dormitory passage myself, and overheard it; and I'll swear he only meant to be decent to you. Of course he blundered, and overdid it, and was whimsical about it—being a boy and not a prig—and would not let the others know that he really meant it, but he *did* mean it. I know Langsdyke, and I tell you he's as plucky as a man, and proud of it—and as sensitive as a girl, and ashamed of it. Look at that Virgil construe of his that you told me about. Do you

suppose a boy takes the trouble to prepare work like that unless he *means* to be kind to a master? There isn't another boy in the fifth, by the way, who *could* have rendered *in optato alveo* by 'in the haven where they fain would be.' I tell you that he's a clever fellow, and a good fellow, and that you've consistently ill-treated and misunderstood him."

"I'm ashamed of myself, Dunham. I always liked the boy really, but I didn't want the others to say that I favored him, and, perhaps, I——"

At this point there was a knock at the door, and the fat-head Smithson appeared in an agitated condition.

"Please, sir, I was with The Celest—with Langsdyke in Dow's Lane the other day, when he said I wasn't, to get me off. And I'd sooner I was expelled than Langsdyke, because I've only got an uncle, and he doesn't care much; and Langsdyke's ill, you see, and it mightn't be good for him, and he'll knock my head off if he hears about it. But I thought as long as one of us was expelled——"

"Go away," said Mr. Liggers, irritably. "No one's going to be expelled. Don't make a fool of yourself. I say, Dunham," he added, when Smithson had withdrawn, "I say—damn it all—this is rather touching, you know."

The following is an extract from a fumigated letter which The Celestial wrote to his sister Madge during the period of his convalescence:

"Well, severity didn't do him, no more did kindness, but illness has made him just proper. He brought me books and things, and came to inquire about me every day. And now that term's over, he has stopped on, and risked infection by keeping me company in the sanatorium. So I said to him last night, 'If you'll tell me what you like next term, I'll do it, sir, because you're too good a sort to have rows with.' And he said, 'So are you, old man.' So that'll be all right."



## HOW THE BOY WAS PREVENTED \*

BY VIRGINIA WOODWARD CLOUD



THEY were on the Witch,  
Dovey Bristol's yacht.

A lone point of land  
was before them, thrusting a  
few sparse pines like scrawny  
arms against the sunset. It  
was Hawk Island, or at least  
Granby said so.

After the excitement of a port  
where they were new, several all-  
night dances, and races by day,

the stillness of the hour brought reaction with it.

Pinkney Thorpe was twanging a tarapatch he had picked up  
in Samoa; Bertie Bartoe, lolling with his feet higher than his  
head, sang softly to his guitar. Granby smoked steadily and  
the Boy was crouched in the bow with his arms over the rail and  
his head on his arms.

Just at this juncture Ping Wing appeared at the stairway. He  
respectfully addressed the cap of the Master of the Yacht, who  
lay on his back blowing smoke skyward.

"Genlen hab dinner samee allee day?"

"Tell him somebody," said the Master.

"No. Just had luncheon," spoke Thorpe. "What do you say,  
Granny?"

Granby knocked his cigar ashes on the rail.

"Supper at nine and the twilight straight."

"Good. Boy, does that suit you?"

But the figure in the bow said nothing.

"He's asleep. So be it."

The Master of the Yacht addressed the waiting Celestial with-  
out turning his gaze from the sky.

"Ah, quite so, Wing, no dinner. Supper, you know. Crabs  
and all that at two bells. Mr. Granby says so."

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"Oh, come now," began Granby, as the Celestial withdrew.

"Granny, you did say so. Your mind is my chief luxury, and Wing has already endowed you with the wisdom of seven Celestial what-you-call-'ems."

"It's the glasses," said Bertie Bartoe.

"It's a way Gran has," said Thorpe. "He lies low and says little and every one fairly breaks his neck to do what he might say if he spoke. I do it myself, don't I, old man?"

Granby only laughed, and Thorpe having tuned the tarapatch to his satisfaction, proceeded to accompany Bertie Bartoe, who was singing softly "O Promise Me."

The Master of the Yacht resigned himself to a fresh cigarette, and Granby having thrown his cigar-end overboard, faced the subdued light of sky and sea and proceeded to eye the Boy, who was, to all intents and purposes—except Granby's—asleep.

The Boy—so-called from his blond beauty rather than from his youth—had just passed majority, and possessed a laugh which impressed the world with two things: a young heart and a fine set of teeth. But the laugh had been missing from recent festivity. Dovey Bristol gave it up at once, saying that every one on board should enjoy himself in his own way, as he himself intended to do. Thorpe soon wearied of flinging sentimental jokes, and Bertie Bartoe was in too exalted a state over the last girl at Carr Island, to descend to anything short of Thorpe's insinuation that with a black sunshade she would have been absolutely plain; it was the red one that did it all. So only Granby knew that the Boy's nights had been lonely vigils, and that since a letter received the day before he had not touched food.

They caught the last mail at Carr Island. Granby delivered it after they were under way. He had stopped short at sight of the handwriting on an elaborately sealed square envelope addressed to the Boy. His face grew straightway stern, and he had paced the deck once before calling the others.

The Boy caught his letter with a flush on his face. He went up in the bow alone, and Granby, opening papers, saw him glance at the contents, clutch the letter in his hand, and seize the rail. He stood so for a second, then strode back, showing a white face. The others were standing apart arguing over an island in the distance.



"Can I land anywhere?" asked the boy between his teeth.

"Not for six days," said Granby, adding three to the proscribed time.

"And I might have gotten this before we left!" muttered the other. Then he went below and threw himself face downward in his berth, with the letter in his hand.

Granby joined the others and told them that the Boy was not well and did not wish luncheon. He followed this with a story of a sea-serpent he had seen off the Sandwich Islands, which Thorpe matched with one about a man he knew whose father had an encounter with a mermaid.

So it was Granby alone who discovered that all night long a solitary figure crouched in the bow, and when the Boy appeared in the morning his pallor was attributed to indisposition.

And now in the nameless light preceding twilight, Granby was finding the sum total of a problem. The guitar and the tarapatch ceased to sound, and Thorpe, who had tried to make Granby talk and failed signally, proceeded to recite "The Yarn of the Nancy Bell."

"That goes right along with the sea," said Bertie Bertoe.

"Everything goes to the sea," spoke Granby, suddenly. "The sea is in touch with every human emotion. It is the heart of creation; the only perfectly restful restlessness."

Thorpe broke in—

"I knew a man once who was haunted by a green and white ghost—"

"So did I," said Granby.

"But mine man was a sailor."

"Mine wasn't. He was a fool."

"Then he wasn't the same man," said Thorpe animatedly. "He vowed he'd never set foot on land to stay, and he did, you know, and a green ghost with white hair came and hunted him down till he had to leave his wife ashore and go back to sea. It's the truth."

"I don't believe it, Pinkie," said Bertie Bartoe. "You always know a man when any one else knows one. How about your ghost, Granby?"

"She was a ghost," said Granby, "but the man didn't know it until too late. He thought her a wonderful reality in green—pale, watery green, like that sky was a while ago. That was the first night he met her, you know. Her hair wasn't white, though, but yellow, like Sicilian wine. She was altogether the

most beautiful and alluring of her race, with a power few could resist. The fellow she haunted was a perverse and resistive creature who had never believed in ghosts, but the more he tried to evade her the more subtle her spell became, until, on one occasion, when he had made up his mind to be utterly impervious, she conquered him.

He gave himself over heart and soul to a mad infatuation. But he did not know his fiancée was a ghost, nor that she possessed an insatiate appetite peculiar to her kind—namely, for gold. She fed upon it. This was revealed to him on the day before his wedding which was to have been, when her ghostship eloped with his cousin, who had unexpectedly come into a fortune just in time.”

“Oh, pshaw!” said Thorpe.

“Fact, indeed. He was so determined to believe in her that he came awfully near blowing his brains out, but was fortunately delirious, or unconscious, or something, just in time, and came to in a hospital, where he had ample opportunity to weigh his own responsibility. In token thereof, he concluded that his life was worth that of two ghosts, and he straightway picked up and went on again.”

Granby clasped his hands behind his head and looked lazily out through the dusk.

“That’s just like you, Granny,” said Bertie Bartoe. “I thought it was going to be a regular ghost.” He swung his guitar troubador fashion and strolled to the stern singing.

“What became of the cousin?” asked Thorpe.



"He was quietly transferred in a duel with an impromptu count at Loisannes," said Granby.

"About her?"

"Assuredly."

"And she?"

"Has returned more alluring and, I doubt not, more unreal than ever."

"That sort of thing goes hard with a fellow, though," said Thorpe, with the air of a connoisseur.

"Luckiest thing ever happened to him, perhaps," replied Granby; "that is, if he taught him to value his own life and that a good woman is the best thing the Almighty ever made. But I suppose it was bitter while it lasted."

"Yes, sir." Thorpe arose with a yawn. "Worse than you can tell by theorizing, old man; but you are so coy about the fair ones that you'll never know by experience."

Granby smiled grimly, and the tarapatch joined the guitar in the stern, from whence two voices presently rang out together. Dusk had fallen, and the green light on the starboard side

gleamed balefully, like the eye of a moving sea-monster. By and by the moon arose, making a clear line across the black water to the figure of the Boy crouching alone in the bow. The Master of the Yacht slept serenely with his face to the first stars, and Granby sat watching the ghostly path left behind them on the water,—“the wake of the color of the shrouds”—when a sound made him turn his head.

It was the Boy. He arose suddenly, with a swift look right and left, as if to assure himself that he was alone. He paused just an instant, then placed one foot on the rail and swung himself upward, when an arm was

thrown strongly around him, he was drawn back, and Granby's voice said, "Donald, my boy, I thought you were asleep."

"Don't!" exclaimed the Boy hoarsely. He flung an arm



outward as if to throw Granby off, but that, too, was caught and held.

"Let me alone!" he panted. His face was turned to Granby's in the early moonlight, which sharpened pitifully the wild pain and rage making its beauty haggard and old.

"I intend to let you alone after awhile," Granby spoke quietly. "Just at present, though, I am particularly anxious for your society."

He looked steadily in the Boy's eyes and the wildness slowly died out of them. A tremor shook the figure within Granby's arm, and then, with a moan, the Boy slipped down and dropped his head again on his hands.

"Why did you stop me? It's no use—" he muttered, brokenly.

"My dear boy, I know you would rather be alone just now, but I am selfish." Granby spoke with his hand firmly on the shoulder of the other. "I feel like talking. You needn't answer. I'll do it all. I'll begin with the green and white ghost of whom I was telling the boys when you were asleep; the one for whom the man was fortunate enough *not* to blow his brains out, and for whom the other fellow was killed at Loissannes. A wonderful creature, with no knowledge of the value of human life, but who had a scientific way of disposing of it. Her name, Donald," he paused slightly, "I wish particularly to tell you. It is Hélène and, by the way, the Herald says she is married to-day to the man who won the Derington races."

Again a tremor seemed to shake the Boy. It may have been a sob. Granby was silent. There was only the sound of the prow cutting through the water, and the guitar and tarapatch ringing in unison to waltz time, seemed far behind.

Then, all of a sudden, Granby began in a low tone to talk. Sometimes his hand rested on the Boy's shoulder, sometimes on his bowed head. The moon grew brighter and the port-light gleamed red—like a bloody spear floating on the black water. Now and then a rough voice from the crew called aloud. Still Granby talked in a way that would have astonished Thorpe. What he said, or whether he himself ever remembered, is neither here nor there; but after a long time had passed the Boy raised his head. The wind blew the yellow hair out of his eyes, and the wildness was gone. He spoke wearily and another would have said irrelevantly, but it was to the point.



"Gran, you never lie, and—and it's all true. I know it is—but you know——"

"Yes, Donald, I know."

"I can't stand it here on the boat. I must get away alone. How can I?"

"You can't," said Granby; "but you can get away with me. I'll have Bristol put me off at Platank to-morrow. He's going to take on some other fellows there. I would like to go up in the pines again, and I think you had better come along."

The Boy said nothing, but nodded.

"Supper leddy," spoke Ping Wing's voice presently.

The Master of the Yacht responded and uncurled himself. The guitar and tarapatch drew near playing, "Tell me with your eyes."

"Come on, you sluggards!" called Thorpe, as the three went below.

"Coming!" answered Granby. "Will you do something for me, Donald?" he added gravely, but daylight would have disclosed a smile in his eyes.

Again the Boy nodded.

"Come to supper."

"No, not to-night——"

"Yes, at once."

The Boy arose unwillingly, drawn away by the other. He brushed his hair back. His face was wan and sharp, but steady, as he laid a detaining hand on Granby's arm.

"Gran, did you know the other fellow? The first one she——"

"Yes, I did," said Granby, looking into the unfathomable darkness beyond them; "yes, I believe he became a chronic bachelor, but—he had learned a great deal."

"And did you know what I—what I was up to awhile ago, when you—came?"

Granby's hand fell on the Boy's shoulder. "Donald, I only know that you seem to have a bad habit of walking in your sleep. But between us I think we can cure it!"

"Thank you," murmured the other. "I know you must think me a fool."

"Heaven forbid!" Granby spoke fervently, and then their hands met.



“Now, come on to supper. It’s amazing how little life holds for a hungry man.”

The Boy pulled himself together with a shake, and went slowly down the stairway towards the lamplight; but Granby paused an instant and looked back at the inevitable white line dividing the water behind them. The salt air blew sharply past his face, which has grown stern and sorrowful.

“Hélène, Hélène!” he muttered. “Could you not have spared this boy!” and as he went below he added under his breath, “though you had no pity for me.”





BY DOROTHEA GERARD



O escape this time!" said old Baron Dornenburg, glaring somewhat savagely at an open letter in his hand. It was a letter from an old schoolfellow, now the representative of Government in a distant province of Austria, and in it the Baron was warmly appealed to on behalf of that schoolfellow's son.

At first sight there was nothing very appalling about this fact, and yet this was the moment which the widowed father of three daughters had been dreading for years.

The men who make successful chaperons are extremely few and far between. A male duenna is either overscrupulous or oversight in the fulfilment of his duties. The Baron belonged to the former order to the extent of making life a burden to himself perpetually, and not infrequently to others also. Young girls were treated by him as a dangerous explosive, within a mile of which no match should be struck for fear of a catastrophe, and so faithful was he to his theory that his friends frequently felt it their duty to reason with him.

"But, Dornenburg, how do you expect ever to get rid of your daughters if you keep them shut up behind gratings?" "Bless the man, he's surely not going to have three old maids help him into his grave!" Such and such-like remarks flew past his ear, but left him unmoved. A male chaperon is in so far easier to satisfy than a female one, that the latter has no peace until her charge has made a brilliant marriage, whereas the former is content if she has not made a disgraceful one.

When on this September morning Baron Dornenburg had done glaring at his old comrade's letter, he reached the same

\* A selection from "Longman's Magazine"



conclusion he had begun with—"No escape this time!" After which he promptly sent for Miss Wilkins.

Miss Wilkins was his youngest daughter's governess—for the Baron still had a daughter in the schoolroom—and she was likewise the English instructress of the elder Baronesses. It had cost a hard fight before she had been secured, and peace with her. Being past sixty, and bald and gouty, the Baron had foolishly supposed that he would be unmolested by the fair sex. He very soon recognized his mistake. Various had been the *Fräuleins* and *Mademoiselles* who had passed in procession through the house of Dornenburg, each one of whom would have been ready to overlook both the bald head and the crippled joints for the sake of sharing with him the crown of seven points. Miss Wilkins was not only the oldest and plainest governess he had been able to unearth for love or money, but had something distinctly puritanical about her person, reassuring to any one with so shaky an opinion of female human nature as had this particular Baron.

"Miss Wilkins," said Baron Dornenburg, addressing the gaunt, middle-aged Englishwoman as she entered, "I have had some very unpleasant news. My old friend, Count Kestler, writes to me here, saying that his son Conrad had just returned from his American tour, and is very anxious for some shooting. His own deer forests have not yet recovered from the disease which infected them two years ago, consequently he appeals to me. I see no escape but to ask Conrad Kestler here for ten days. It is to consult with you as to the precautions to be taken that I have requested your presence here. In the first place——"

"I presume the young man is unmarried?" asks Miss Wilkins, abruptly, and a spark of some quite newly-born interest seemed to illumine her usually chilly gray eyes.

"Of course Conrad is unmarried," confirmed the Baron, in some astonishment.

"And the Kestlers' name has a good sound, and the fortune is considerable." Miss Wilkins was warming to her subject as she spoke. "Oh, Baron Dornenburg, I do believe that letter from your old friend is nothing but an interposition of Providence! Why, don't you see as clearly as possible that this means a husband for one of your daughters?"

"Hold, there!" said the Baron, gruffly, flushing dark red from vexation. "If ever I believed that any woman could keep her fingers out of the match-making pie I took you to be that woman,

Miss Wilkins; but I do believe you're made of the same stuff as the others. Husband, indeed! Marriage! Count Kestler of Föhrenstein would long ago have fallen a prey to some enterprising Vienna mamma if matrimony had been in his line. I have not seen Conrad since he was a boy, but his fame as a *mangeur de cœurs* has long since penetrated even these woodland retreats. I understand him to rank as the most successful lady-killer in Vienna society. In fact, his one vocation in life seems to be to go about turning heads and breaking hearts; and this is the man who, for ten days, is to dwell under the same roof with my girls! Upon my word, it's letting the wolf into the sheepfold."

"Very possibly the wolf is not so black as he is painted," Miss Wilkins cautiously suggested.

"He is blacker, at any rate, far, than he ought to be, and it will require both your vigilance and mine to checkmate the empty-headed lovmaking with which he is sure to pass his time. I have been turning over the matter in my mind, and have come to the conclusion that during these ten critical days you must be the constant companion of my two elder girls. It is the only possibility of averting the danger that threatens."

"And Elsbeth?"

"Let the child have a holiday. It will do her no harm to shut up her books and run wild for ten days."

Miss Wilkins shook her head, but so entirely were the Baron's thoughts taken up with his elder girls that he never even noticed the disapproving gesture. Elsbeth was a child, still safe in the schoolroom; the day when she took to long skirts would be time enough to begin worrying about her.

When, at the end of half an hour's private consultation, the gaunt Englishwoman left the Baron's presence, she was primed with warnings, and yet for all that—so obstinate are some fibres in human nature—the spark of match-making enthusiasm was not utterly quenched in her eye. Silently, but not the less irrevocably, was the middle-aged Englishwoman determined that this opportunity should not be lost. It was with an eye to the main object that she encouraged both Anna and Hélène to pass their wardrobes in review, and made various well-meant, but not over-skillful, attempts in the direction of freshening up tumbled flounces and procuring a new lease of life for hats which had borne the brunt of the summer. During this week of preparation such things as turned ribbons and half-curved feathers belonged to the common features of the apartments, though the

approach of the Baron generally caused them to disappear. In their heart of hearts both girls had set upon those ten prospective days hopes which, as yet, they had not acknowledged even to themselves. Even the domestic virtues, of which both possessed a fair share, could not blind them to the fact that it was rather hard to be aged respectively twenty and twenty-two without ever having seen the inside of a Vienna drawing-room. Their own gentle resignation filled them with wonder, but, nevertheless, did not prevent occasional meditations being made on the possibility of a husband dropping from the skies. Count Conrad Kestler's proposed visit seemed exactly to answer to that description of event, and was, therefore, duly prepared for.

"Will he be a big or a little man?" was the doubt which slunk in and out of the souls of both Baronesses. The first sight of the stranger would help greatly to clear the situation, for the big Anna could place no hopes on a scrap of a man, while the miniature H el ene would never have the courage to fall in love with a giant. And yet, when the day came and the moment, and when from behind the window-curtains two pairs of blue eyes peeped at the new arrival, nothing like a definite conclusion was come to. Upon an identical impulse, Anna and H el ene looked at each other and laughed. Not a word was said, but they understood each other perfectly. The glance exchanged between the two sisters said as much as: "I must have another look at him before I make up my mind, but he is certain to do for one of us two."

This was the conclusion which Miss Wilkins likewise had reached, though she would have greatly preferred if Count Kestler had not been one of those men of indescribable height whom it would be incorrect to describe as tall and who yet are unquestionably not short. So long as the prospective husband was not distinctly assigned to one of her charges, she could not feel as though the campaign were opened.

But the first evening passed without betraying to Miss Wilkins anything beyond the fact of Count Kestler being a lady's man in the fullest sense of the word. When he was talking to Anna the watchful Englishwoman felt ready to stake her soul that he had succumbed to that young lady's massive charms, and yet the moment he approached H el ene he appeared to have eyes for nothing but her fairy-like grace. As for the poor over-conscientious Baron, he spent not only the evening, but most of the night upon thorns, tossing about from side to side, and passing in

review before his mind's eye all the symptoms of love-sickness which he was convinced of having noted in both his daughters. Had not Anna forgotten to hand round the sugar, and H el ene twice dropped her handkerchief in the course of the evening?

The author of all these cruel anxieties was meanwhile enjoying a perfectly unbroken night's rest. Owing to a belated butterfly which came sailing in by the open window, having slept through the proper butterfly season and being condemned to make the best of September weather, Count Kestler's morning slumbers come to a somewhat premature conclusion. Had it not been for this tardy butterfly much might have happened differently; also, whenever in future days his thoughts traveled back to the little yellow-winged creature, Conrad Kestler saw in it a direct instrument of fate, or, at any rate, much more than an ordinary butterfly.

At the moment, however, it must be admitted that the instrument of fate was not greeted by him with all the delight that would have been becoming. Having opened his eyes to see what it was that was tickling his nose, his lips first formed themselves to a mutter—about which, perhaps, the least said the better—and then to a yawn. In the very act of turning over for another snooze his eye was caught by the flash of light upon water, and he rose on his elbow to see the very first sunbeam sliding from between two pine-clad mountain flanks and striking rose-colored fire from the surface of a good-sized lake.

Unquestionably it was a pretty prospect, and yet it was not so much the prospect itself as the meaning which it bore to him that caused Conrad Kestler to relinquish his idea of another snooze.

"I didn't know they had water here," shot through his mind. "That means wild ducks."

And half an hour later the newly-arrived guest might have been observed sallying forth from the still sleeping house, with the intention of having a closer look at that sheet of water which, seen from a distance, seemed to contain such delicious promises of sport. This thought had been the motor of his action, but, once having reached the open air, he was in danger of forgetting his object, so surprised and pleased was he with what he saw on all sides. Not that the trees at Dornenburg were older or finer than those at his own home, or the flower beds better kept, or the lawns better tended, but because for years past he had not seen any of those things with the first veil of morning still beau-

tifying them, for which reason he appeared to himself to be d covering them over again. There was something distinc soothing about this consciousness of being the only meml awake of a household; why, the chances were that not even t kitchen fire was yet lit, nor was either rake or spade being pli anywhere within eyesight. No privacy could have been me perfect, no promenade more ideally planned for the purposes a quiet meditation. So irresistible, in fact, were the accessori that Conrad had scarcely reached the middle of the lime-tt avenue, which led from the door of the house, when he fou himself drifting into a course of serious reflections.

"My father had an object in sending me here beyond that shooting wild ducks," thus ran the current of his thoughts. "I know he thinks it time for me to settle, and nothing would plee him better than for me to marry one of the daughters of his c comrade. Dear old Vater! I would please him if I could, b nothing would ever make me content with either a giantess o pigmy. And it's a pity, too," he continued, "for I like gold hair, and both the big and the little face are very pleasantly p and white, and I suppose it is about time for me to be gett settled."

When he had paced down another bit of the avenue he seem to remember that his father had spoken about three Dornenb girls.

"And I have only seen two, as yet," he reflected, "wh means, I suppose, that the third is in the nursery."

So deep was he in his meditations that when, at the end of avenue, he stepped out on the very shore of the lake, he st still in as much astonishment as though this had not been object of his walk. At the same moment he became aware t he was, after all, not the only member of the household on legs. In a boat chained to a pole at the edge of the water th stood a girl with a straw hat shading her face, and her b turned to him, while she busied herself with the fastening.

Conrad's first impression was one of annoyance at the in ruption of his privacy, his second was the question, "Who this be?" Both the hair and what he could see of the curv the cheek seemed to be of the right color, and yet it did appear to him to be either quite the big or quite the little E nenburg girl.

At this moment she straightened herself and turned rou evidently despairing of the chain. Perhaps it was owing to

thoughts having been occupied with the question of feminine stature that Conrad was now aware of a distinct feeling of satisfaction, for there could be no doubt about this apparition being of the "right height," just as there could be no doubt about its being the youngest Dornenburg girl.

"Let me help you with that chain," said Conrad, stepping forward, much relieved by the discovery that the young boat-woman's skirts were not quite regulation length, which was enough, with one blow, to banish etiquette from the scene. "I fancy I know that sort of fastening. But first let me introduce myself. I am——"

"I know who you are quite as well as you know yourself," she briskly interrupted him. "Why, the house has been positively alive with your name since this time last week. I never thought I could get so tired of any person before seeing him."

"You don't say so? I really was not prepared——" stammered Conrad, whose habit it was not to be easily taken aback, but who, nevertheless, felt rather at a loss for words wherewith to answer this unexpected address. "I was not aware of having cast so huge a shadow before me. There, the chain is undone, and now, unless you have irrevocably made up your mind to solitude, perhaps you will allow me to row you out on the lake?"

She looked at him critically, as though turning over the proposition in her mind, but ended by acquiescing.

"I want some of those bulrushes over there," she remarked, when they had pushed off from the shore. "And you can help me to gather them if you like; so, perhaps, after all, it was a piece of good luck that brought you out walking so early, though I didn't think so at first sight. I had been looking forward to having the whole lake to myself, and was greatly bothered by seeing you."

"If I am to be quite honest," said Conrad, showing his even, white teeth, "I must confess to having likewise felt far from delighted at the first moment of our meeting. After all, it is only human nature to bear a grudge against the person whose appearance on the scene brings us down a peg in our own estimation, by proving to us that we are not the only individual about."

"You are describing exactly what I felt," remarked the girl with grave approval. "I do believe I hated you at first sight."

"That sounds as if your virtue were as spasmodic as mine,

and I were mistaken in counting you among that chosen tribe known as early risers."

"That depends upon what I have got to get up for. Surely nobody in his senses would hurry out of bed on account of lessons, while, again, it's a pity to waste a bit of a holiday asleep. By the bye, how many days are you going to stay here?"

"I believe the Baron is going to let me stay till the 16th."

"Couldn't you make it a little longer? I am sure you could manage to trail out your visit to the 20th, at least, if you tried."

"I really don't exactly know——" said Conrad, in renewed astonishment.

"You are surprised at my asking you to stay, after having told you that I hated you at first sight. The explanation is really very simple. You see," and here the childish face settled into an expression of preternatural seriousness, "as long as you are here I am sure of my holidays; therefore, it stands to reason that I want you to stay as long as you possibly can."

"As long as I am here!" Conrad smiled a smile of puzzled amusement. "This is really very interesting. I was not aware I had reached the stage of holidays being given in my honor."

"As far as I can make out, it's not in your honor exactly, but as a sort of defense against you. By the bye, you are sure to be able to tell me what a lady-killer is. I want very much to know."

"Why am I so sure to be able to tell you?"

"Because I heard papa saying to Miss Wilkins—he has been having long talks with her almost every day for the last week—that she must keep her eyes well open, because the visitor he expected was a dangerous lady-killer. And it is in order to leave her plenty of liberty for opening her eyes that my lessons have been stopped, and that for the time of your stay she has transformed herself from a governess into a kind of——"

"Gooseberry," completed Conrad, with an amused chuckle. "Come, this raises me enormously in my own estimation; I had no idea I was so irresistible as all this."

"Then being a lady-killer means being irresistible, does it? It is one of those things I suppose I ought to know by this time, considering that I was seventeen last month."

"Were you, really?" asked Conrad in genuine astonishment. "I would never have guessed more than fifteen."

"That's all thanks to these ridiculous short skirts," she retorted, flushing scarlet from vexation. "It always cost papa a tremen-

dous pang to acknowledge any of us grown up. That's one of the reasons why I've always got to take my meals in the school-room when there's a guest in the house. Oh, not so quick! Here we are at the bulrushes!"

"Do you think it would make the boat sink if I took them all?" she asked at the end of ten minutes, during which both she and Conrad had been hard at work, and in the course of which she had gradually rid herself of hat, gloves and jacket. Her light golden hair was powdered with feathery morsels of reeds, and her blue eyes were shining with intense enjoyment.

"It looks rather like it; but must we have them all at once? Is there any reason why we should not return for a second or a third helping?"

"No; only that you will be going out shooting after breakfast."

"But there are other days before the 16th."

"So there are. And if papa should ask you to stay beyond the 16th, please remember what I told you about my lessons. Let me see; how could you manage to convey to me that the matter is settled? It will be best, I think, if we invent some sort of sign."

"This is ripening into a conspiracy," said Conrad, in increasing amusement. "I had no idea what I was letting myself in for when I turned out of bed this morning. But for fear you should indulge in empty dreams of holidays to come, perhaps I had better tell you at once that my father expects me home on the 16th."

She heaved a sigh of disappointment, but added at once, philosophically:

"Well, all I can do is to make the most of the ten days I have got before me, though I know quite well that I shall never be able to get through all the bramble and bilberry hunts I have planned, nor to collect half the mushrooms I have got my eye upon. This is the very best season for holidays, you see."

"If you consider me worthy of the post," said Conrad, slipping, as he spoke, almost unconsciously into the tone of gallantry he generally adopted toward women, "I should be most happy to act as adjutant; of course, only under the supposition," and here his eyes twinkled mischievously, "that you have no objections to the company of a lady-killer."

"Why should I have an objection? I suppose a lady-killer



can only become dangerous for a full-grown lady, and I am not that yet, as papa is never tired of telling me."

Once more Conrad felt almost foolish. The straight gaze of those cloudless blue eyes was enough to make the practiced man of the world feel as though he had been attempting a sacrilege.

It was just after they had parted on the shore of the lake that Count Kestler heard his name very earnestly pronounced, and became aware that the young boatwoman was hurrying after him.

"Do think of it again!" she said rather breathlessly. "I mean about the 16th, and if it is possible, please—please stay a little longer."

With the last words she had turned again, and in the same moment disappeared among the bushes. Conrad could hear the twigs snapping to the right and to the left after he had lost sight of her.

It was not until he had got back to the house that he suddenly remembered the wild ducks, and, very much to his astonishment, realized that, as far as knowing whether there were any to be hoped for on the lake, he had come back exactly as wise as he had started.

Breakfast was scarcely over when the battered green hat of the old gamekeeper was seen to pass the window, whereupon Conrad became a sportsman again, and, leaving his second cup of coffee untouched, hurried away for his gun.

As for the second time that day he made his way down the lime avenue, he could not help wondering why he had not mentioned his matutinal excursion in the boat, and the only conclusion he could come to was that a touch of mystery never fails to give a charm to the most commonplace adventure, and that the idea of a plot between himself and the youngest Baroness, whom he understood to be called Elsbeth, had tickled his fancy.

Meanwhile the old Baron had established himself in his arm-chair with a heartfelt sigh of relief. For the next few hours, at least, he might relax his vigilance, seeing that the dreaded individual was safely disposed of.

But a rude shock awaited the Baron's peace of mind that evening, when the conversation at the supper table acquainted him with the fact that Anna and H el ene's afternoon walk had, strangely enough, taken the same direction as Conrad Kestler's shooting excursion, whether through a provoking coincidence or

owing to some culpable negligence of Miss Wilkins, who had been of the party, it was difficult to ascertain. Never before had the Baron so acutely felt the inconvenience of being gouty. With the free use of his joints, half his anxieties would have been relieved, for as long as he could be the constant companion of his dangerous guest, it was pretty certain that all serious peril could be averted, while, alas! what incalculable harm might not be brought about by a few undisturbed encounters in the romantic shadow of the pine woods?

To add to his anxieties, the cloudless September weather seemed bent upon tempting the girls to extend their daily promenades far beyond their normal length. From breakfast to dinner and from dinner to supper the Baron was generally alone at home—for Elsbeth made the most of her holidays by running wild in her own company—and passed his time in fuming at his enforced inactivity and counting the days till Count Kestler's departure.

Gradually, however, he became aware, somewhat to his own annoyance, that the feelings with which he was looking forward to the 16th were not feelings of unmixed pleasure. Conrad might be a lady-killer of the first water, whose path was strewn with broken hearts, much as the sea-shore is strewn with broken shells, but that did not prevent his voice and his laugh, and something in the irresistible sparkle of his eye, carrying back the Baron very vividly in memory to the days when his old comrade had been young. It was with a pleasant feeling of surprise, too, that he noted another circumstance in connection with his guest. Conrad evidently was no lie-a-bed. On two different occasions the old gentleman had caught sight of Count Kestler sallying forth from the house at an hour when the housemaids should indeed have been astir but were not, and he regularly appeared late for breakfast with his hair wet by dew, and not infrequently with fragments of grass or a red or yellow leaf clinging to his coat. The Baron began to admit that there must, after all, be some good in the man. An individual who found pleasure in such simple country enjoyments as a walk before breakfast, could not be entirely corrupted by the wickedness of town life.

Miss Wilkins, on her side, was much pleased by the discovery that a point which for long had been a rather sore one between herself and her pupil, had shaped itself according to her own wishes.

“Your cheeks are twice as pink as usual, and your eyes twice

as blue," she said approvingly on meeting Elsbeth in the passage one morning laden with Autumn crocuses. "That is the result of early hours."

"Or of holidays," said Elsbeth promptly.

"Can you explain to me how it comes about that you require so much less sleep during holidays than on lesson days? I don't know of any bribe by which I could have got you out of bed before 7 o'clock, so long as books and atlases were in sight."

Elsbeth smiled happily and almost guiltily, but attempted no explanation, and listened with quite unusual patience to the wholesome remarks on the subject of early rising, with which Miss Wilkins considered it her duty to improve the occasion.

It was on the fifth day of Conrad's stay that the Baron, when parting with him for the night, remarked approvingly:

"I see you are as faithful a cultivator of morning hours as your father used to be, but I fear your walk to-morrow is likely to turn into a shower-bath."

Conrad looked somewhat taken aback, and, having reached the privacy of his room, he flung himself into a chair and began to review the situation.

"That looks like being watched"—thus ran the course of his reflections. "The old man is just bristling with suspicions. Is there any way, I wonder, to put him off the scent?"

He sat for some minutes, gnawing his mustache and frowning at the carpet, but presently his brow cleared and he laughed aloud in the way a man laughs whose fancy is tickled by some especially good joke.

"That will do it," he decided, as he rose to go to bed.

The Baron's prophecy concerning the weather proved correct, and it was with a somewhat rueful face that Conrad looked through the streaming pane next morning. And yet, upon reflection, he had to admit that in one way a rainy day fitted into his plans almost better than a fair one would have done.

Breakfast being over, he promptly proposed a game of billiards, which was enthusiastically accepted by the young ladies, and for the perils of which the Baron saw no remedy but to take a cue himself. The forenoon hours were fraught with severe trials for this conscientious father. While hobbling around the table as well as his gouty knees would allow him, it was little short of agony to note the soft glances which Conrad Kestler distributed pretty equally between the two girls, and to have to listen to the playful remarks—full of veiled meanings, as it seemed to him—of

which Conrad's conversation was chiefly composed. It must be the ennui of a rainy day which was inducing the lady-killer to bring out all his resources, for the Baron had never seen him in such force as to-day.

Next day was not much better. The sportsman, indeed, went out after breakfast, the barometer having risen, but a heavy shower brought him back in the middle of the forenoon, and, though it cleared off soon, he showed no inclination to sally forth a second time. Something was said about a twisted ankle, and as here, again, main force could not be called to aid, there was nothing for it but to stand at the window and grind his teeth as he watched Conrad pacing the garden path beside his eldest daughter. He stood it fairly well until a pause was made beside a bush of late roses, but when Conrad, in full sight of his window, broke off a pink rose and, with an exquisite bow, handed it to his companion, the Baron sent for Miss Wilkins and commanded her to invent some excuse for summoning Anna to the house.

Miss Wilkins obeyed, with the result that when next the Baron looked out of the window H el ene was sitting on a garden bench, straight opposite, in lively conversation with Count Kestler and with one of the same late roses blooming in her waistband.

"Only three more days till the 16th!" was the only thought to which the poor, harassed father could turn for comfort.

When in due course of time the 16th arrived, the sun rose once more dazzling and cloudless, exactly as it had done on the first days of Conrad's visit, and exactly as on the first day he stole down the staircase of the sleeping house and along the lime avenue which led to the shores of the lake. His portmanteau was packed and his wraps strapped up, for the carriage had been ordered directly after breakfast. To judge from the expression of perplexity and indecision which sat on his face, his impending journey did not fill him with any special delight. Exactly as on that first day he was plunged so deeply in meditation that he came to an astonished standstill on finding himself on the edge of the water, and exactly as on that first day the boat was chained to the shore, only that this time Elsbeth sat in it with hands lying inactive in her lap, and blue eyes that seemed to have been impatiently watching the avenue. A new and happy smile brightened Conrad's face; instinctively he raised his head. The sight of that childish figure seemed to have solved some doubt that had been pursuing him.

It was not until they were some distance from the shore that Elsbeth said, a little unsteadily: "So this is really the end of my holiday?"

Conrad looked straight into her face, still with that shadow of a happy smile hovering about his lips.

"That depends upon whether or not you are anxious to prolong it."

"How can it depend upon myself?" she asked, as defiantly as she could.

"Do you not remember once before asking me to stay beyond the 16th? You said, 'Please, please,' then, and I said, 'No'; but if you were to say 'Please, please' a second time, I would have no choice but to say 'Yes,' and after that don't you think that your holidays would begin for good and all?"

"I don't believe I said it," retorted Elsbeth, growing furiously scarlet.

"Think again."

She thought again, and the eyes which had been attempting to stare defiance sunk suddenly before his gaze.

"Well," asked Conrad, "is my visit to be prolonged or not?"

"No," she answered, breathlessly, while her pulses throbbed in expectation of something which she both longed for and dreaded, without quite understanding what it was, "I cannot say it a second time."

"And if I stay without being asked? Tell me, Elsbeth," and letting slip one of the oars, Conrad bent forward and possessed himself instead of one of the small ungloved hands that lay in her lap.

It was exactly at this most unfortunate juncture that Miss Wilkins, who had happened to select to-day for putting into practice her theory of early rising, stepped out from a side path on to the shore of the lake.

Neither of the occupants of the boat observed her, but for a full minute the Englishwoman, who was not short-sighted, stood rooted to the spot; then she rubbed her eyes and looked again, and finally she turned decisively on her heel, like a person who has come to a resolution, and hurried back toward the house.

Though Miss Wilkins was both an Englishwoman and a governess, she was not a prude, but the scene she had just witnessed had played the part of that well-known last straw to which the camel's back is so apt to succumb. So long as she had seen in

Conrad a prospective husband for one of her marriageable charges, she had had eyes for none but his good qualities; but now that he had proved a failure from the matrimonial point of view, she had suddenly become alive to his defects.

Evidently the Baron was quite right. Thus she told herself as she hastened toward the house. A man who indulged in such objectless pastimes as this could be no more than a heartless libertine.

The Baron was in his dressing-gown when he was told that Miss Wilkins wished to speak to him immediately. It was with a hairbrush in one hand and a razor in the other that he came forth to grant the interview. He listened in silence to the governess's tale, but she knew by the look that came over his only partially shaved face that this was the limit of his patience more decisively even than of hers.

"I am almost sorry the young scamp is going to-day," he remarked between his teeth, "so that I shall not have the satisfaction of turning him out of doors."

Five minutes later the dressing-gown had been exchanged for a morning coat, the more pressing defects of toilet remedied, and the Baron, still with a half-shaved chin, and with a look of ill-suppressed fury, making him alarming to behold, hobbled out once more into the passage.

Scarcely two paces from his door he barely saved himself from running against Conrad Kestler, who seemed in as great a hurry as himself.

"The very man I want!" he burst out, glaring at his guest. "Will you please step in here, Count Kestler? I have a word to say to you!"

"Now, then," he began, when Conrad had followed him into the room, "I know that you are leaving my house to-day—fortunately, I cannot help adding—but, nevertheless, I consider it my duty as a father to demand an explanation of your conduct. It is bad enough to flirt barefacedly with grown-up women, but, let me tell you, a man who takes pleasure in turning the heads of children in short frocks should keep clear of respectable houses."

He paused, almost snorting with indignation, but no answer came. The young man stood looking past him at the window, with a light on his face which the Baron did not remember having seen there before, and apparently not listening.

"Have you anything to say in excuse?" asked the old gen-

tleman in a more subdued tone, struck, in spite of himself, by the other's look.

"I have only this to say, that when you met me in the passage just now, I was on my way to propose for your daughter's hand."

The Baron's jaw dropped.

"My daughter?" he stammered after a moment of stupefaction. "Her hand? I don't understand. Do you mean Anna or H el ene? You cannot have them both, you know," he added grimly.

"Thanks; I don't want either. It is your youngest daughter whom I hope to make my wife."

"But my youngest daughter is Elsbeth."

"And it is Elsbeth whom I want to marry."

This time the Baron required a longer pause. Without taking his eyes from Conrad's face, he put out his hand and felt his way backward to the armchair, where he sat staring for a full minute.

"Young man, is this a joke?" he sternly inquired at last, and being told that it was the most unimpeachable earnest, he added: "But Elsbeth is in the school-room; she is in short skirts; she——"

"Will be eighteen on her next birthday," completed Conrad.

Baron Dornenburg went through a rapid mental calculation.

"Bless my heart! So she will."

"And do you know of any valid reason why a woman of eighteen should not either wear long skirts or marry a man of twenty-eight?"

"Well, no, I suppose not," said the Baron, still in a tone of helpless bewilderment.

"And in consideration of my being the son of your old friend, do you not think——"

"I—I think nothing at all just now; I know nothing. The matter must be considered. I must talk to Miss Wilkins."

Miss Wilkins was talked to, with the result that Anna and H el ene, while standing at the drawing-room window after breakfast, were greatly surprised to see the carriage that had come round to the door sent back again to the stables.

By the evening of this same day they knew what the delay meant, having learned, with as much astonishment as genuine delight, that, though at present no husband was in store for either of them, Providence had assigned a prospective brother.

And that was the end of Elsbeth's holiday.

## AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY\*



IN one of the dirtiest and most gloomy streets leading to the Rue Saint Denis, in Paris, there stands a tall and ancient house, the lower portion of which is a large mercer's shop. This establishment is held to be one of the very best in the neighborhood, and has for many years belonged to an individual on whom we will bestow the name of Ramin.

About ten years ago Monsieur Ramin was a jovial, red-faced man of forty, who joked his customers into purchasing his goods, flattered the pretty *grisettes* outrageously, and now and then gave them a Sunday treat at the barrier, as the cheapest way of securing their custom. Some people thought him a careless, good-natured fellow, and wondered how, with his off-hand ways, he contrived to make money so fast, but those who knew him well saw that he was one of those who "never lost an opportunity." Others declared that Monsieur Ramin's own definition of his character was, that he was a "*bon enfant*," and that "it was all luck." He shrugged his shoulders and laughed when people hinted at his deep scheming in making, and his skill in taking advantage of, Excellent Opportunities.

He was sitting in his gloomy parlor one fine morning in Spring, breakfasting from a dark liquid honored with the name of onion soup, glancing at the newspaper, and keeping a vigilant look on the shop through the open door, when his old servant Catherine suddenly observed:

"I suppose you know Monsieur Bonelle has come to live in the vacant apartment on the fourth floor?"

"What?" exclaimed Monsieur Ramin in a loud key.

Catherine repeated her statement, to which her master listened in total silence.

"Well!" he said, at length, in his most careless tones; "what about the old fellow?" and he once more resumed his triple occupation of reading, eating and watching.

\* A selection from "Household Words."



“Why,” continued Catherine, “they say he is nearly dying, and that his housekeeper, Marguerite, vowed he could never get upstairs alive. It took two men to carry him up; and when he was at length quiet in bed, Marguerite went down to the porter’s lodge and sobbed there a whole hour, saying, ‘Her poor master had the gout, the rheumatics, and a bad asthma; that though he had been got upstairs, he would never come down again alive; that if she could only get him to confess his sins and make his will she would not mind it so much; but that when she spoke of the lawyer or the priest, he blasphemed at her like a heathen, and declared he would live to bury her and everybody else.’”

Monsieur Ramin heard Catherine with great attention, forgot to finish his soup, and remained for five minutes in profound rumination, without so much as perceiving two customers who had entered the shop and were waiting to be served. When aroused he was heard to exclaim:

“What an excellent opportunity!”

Monsieur Bonelle had been Ramin’s predecessor. The succession of the latter to the shop was a mystery. No one ever knew how it was that this young and poor assistant managed to replace his patron. Some said that he had detected Monsieur Bonelle in frauds, which he threatened to expose, unless the business were given up to him as the price of his silence; others averred that, having drawn a prize in the lottery, he had resolved to set up a fierce opposition over the way, and that Monsieur Bonelle, having obtained a hint of his intentions, had thought it most prudent to accept the trifling sum his clerk offered and avoid a ruinous competition. Some charitable souls—moved no doubt by Monsieur Bonelle’s misfortune—endeavored to console and pump him; but all they could get from him was the bitter exclamation, “To think I should have been duped by *him*!”

Years passed away; Ramin prospered, and neither thought nor heard of his “good old master.” The house, of which he tenanted the lower portion, was offered for sale; he had long coveted it, and had almost concluded an agreement with the actual owner, when Monsieur Bonelle unexpectedly stepped in at the eleventh hour and, by offering a trifle more, secured the bargain. The rage and mortification of Monsieur Ramin were extreme. He could not understand how Bonelle, whom he had thought ruined, had scraped up so large a sum; his lease was out, and he now felt himself at the mercy of the man he had so much injured. But either Monsieur Bonelle was free from vin-

dictive feelings, or those feelings did not blind him to the expediency of keeping a good tenant, for, though he raised the rent until Monsieur Ramin groaned inwardly, he did not refuse to renew the lease. They had met at that period, but never since.

"Well, Catherine," observed Monsieur Ramin to his old servant, on the following morning, "How is that good Monsieur Bonelle getting on?"

"I dare say you feel very uneasy about him," she replied with a sneer.

Monsieur Ramin looked up and frowned.

"Catherine," said he, dryly, "you will have the goodness, in the first place, not to make impertinent remarks; in the second place, you will oblige me by going upstairs to inquire after the health of Monsieur Bonelle, and say that I sent you."

Catherine grumbled and obeyed. Her master was in the shop when she returned, in a few minutes, and delivered with evident satisfaction the following gracious message:

"Monsieur Bonelle desires his compliments to you, and declines to state how he is; he will also thank you to attend to your own shop, and not to trouble yourself about his health."

"How does he look?" asked Monsieur Ramin, with perfect composure.

"I caught a glimpse of him, and he appears to me to be rapidly preparing for the good offices of the undertaker."

Monsieur Ramin smiled, rubbed his hands, and joked merrily with a dark-eyed grisette, who was cheapening some ribbon for her cap. That girl made an excellent bargain that day.

Towards dusk the mercer left the shop to the care of his attendants and softly stole up to the fourth story. In answer to his gentle ring, a little old woman opened the door, and, giving him a rapid look, said briefly:

"Monsieur is inexorable; he won't see any doctor whatever."

She was going to shut the door in his face when Ramin quickly interposed, under his breath, with "*I am not a doctor.*"

She looked at him from head to foot.

"Are you a lawyer?"

"Nothing of the sort, my good lady."

"Well, then, are you a priest?"

"I may almost say, quite the reverse."

"Indeed, you must go away; master sees no one."

Once more she would have shut the door, but Ramin prevented her.

"My good lady," said he, in his most insinuating tones, "it is true I am neither a lawyer, a doctor, nor a priest. I am an old friend, a very old friend of your excellent master; I have come to see good Monsieur Bonelle in his present affliction."

Marguerite did not answer, but allowed him to enter and closed the door behind him. He was going to pass from the narrow and gloomy ante-chamber into an inner room—whence now proceeded a sound of loud coughing—when the old woman laid her hand on his arm, and, raising herself on tiptoe to reach his ear, whispered:

"For Heaven's sake, sir, since you are his friend, do talk to him; do tell him to make his will, and hint something about a soul to be saved, and all that sort of thing; do, sir!"

Monsieur Ramin nodded and winked in a way that said "I will." He proved, however, his prudence by not speaking aloud, for a voice from within sharply exclaimed:

"Marguerite, you are talking to some one. Marguerite, I will see neither doctor nor lawyer, and if any meddling priest dare——"

"It is only an old friend, sir," interrupted Marguerite, opening the inner door.

Her master, on looking up, perceived the red face of Monsieur Ramin peeping over the old woman's shoulder, and irefully cried out:

"How dare you bring that fellow here? And you, sir, how dare you come?"

"My good old friend, there are feelings," said Ramin, spreading his fingers over the left pocket of his waistcoat,—*"there are feelings,"* he repeated, *"that cannot be subdued. One such feeling brought me here. The fact is, I am a good-natured, easy fellow, and I never bear malice. I never forget an old friend, but love to forget old differences when I find one party in affliction."*

He drew a chair forward as he spoke, and composedly seated himself opposite to his late master.

Monsieur Bonelle was a thin old man, with a pale, sharp face and keen features. At first he eyed his visitor from the depths of his vast armchair; but, as if not satisfied with this distant view, he bent forward and, laying both hands on his thin knees, he looked up into Ramin's face with a fixed and piercing gaze. He had not, however, the power of disconcerting his guest.

"What did you come here for?" he at length asked.

"Merely to have the extreme satisfaction of seeing how you are, my good old friend. Nothing more."

"Well, look at me—and then go."

Ramin threw himself back in his chair and laughed blandly, as much as to say, "*Can* you suspect me?"

"I have no shop now out of which you can wheedle me," continued the old man, "and surely you are not such a fool as to come to me for money."

"Money?" repeated the draper, as if his host had mentioned something he never dreamt of. "Oh, no!"

Ramin saw it would not do to broach the subject he had really come about too abruptly, now that suspicion seemed so wide awake—the opportunity had not arrived.

"There is something up, Ramin, I know; I see it in the twinkle of your eye; but you can't deceive me again."

"Deceive *you*?" said the jolly schemer, shaking his head reverentially. "Deceive a man of your penetration and depth? Impossible! The bare supposition is flattery. My dear friend," he continued, soothingly, "I did not dream of such a thing. The fact is, Bonelle, though they call me a jovial, careless, rattling dog, I have a conscience; and, somehow, I have never felt quite easy about the way in which I became your successor downstairs. It *was* rather sharp practice, I admit."

Bonelle seemed to relent.

"Now for it," said the Opportunity-hunter to himself—"By the bye" (speaking aloud), "this house must be a great trouble to you in your present weak state? Two of your lodgers have lately gone away without paying—a great nuisance, especially to an invalid."

"I tell you I'm as sound as a colt."

"At all events, the whole concern must be a great bother to you. If I were you I would sell the house."

"And if I were *you*," returned the landlord, dryly, "I would buy it——"

"Precisely," interrupted the tenant, eagerly.

"That is, if you could get it. Phoo! I knew you were after something. Will you give eighty thousand francs for it?" abruptly asked Monsieur Bonelle.

"Eighty thousand francs!" echoed Ramin. "Do you take me for Louis Philippe or the Bank of France?"

"Then we'll say no more about it. Are you not afraid of leaving your shop so long?"

Ramin returned to the charge, heedless of the hint to depart. "The fact is, my good old friend, ready money is not my strong point just now. But if you wish very much to be relieved of the concern, what say you to a life annuity? I could manage that."

Monsieur Bonelle gave a short, dry, churchyard cough, and looked as if his life were not worth an hour's purchase. "You think yourself immensely clever, I dare say," he said. "They have persuaded you that I am dying. Stuff! I shall bury you yet."

The mercer glanced at the thin, fragile frame and exclaimed to himself, "Deluded old gentleman! My dear Bonelle," he continued aloud, "I know well the strength of your admirable constitution; but allow me to observe that you neglect yourself too much. Now, suppose a good, sensible doctor——"

"Will you pay him?" interrogated Bonelle, sharply.

"Most willingly," replied Ramin, with an eagerness that made the old man smile. "As to the annuity, since the subject annoys you, we will talk of it some other time."

"After you have heard the doctor's report," sneered Bonelle.

The mercer gave him a stealthy glance, which the old man's keen look immediately detected. Neither could repress a smile; these good souls understood one another perfectly, and Ramin saw that this was not the Excellent Opportunity he desired, and departed.

The next day Ramin sent a neighboring medical man, and heard it was his opinion that if Bonelle held on for three months longer it would be a miracle. Delightful news!

Several days elapsed, and although very anxious, Ramin assumed a careless air, and did not call upon his landlord or take any notice of him. At the end of the week old Marguerite entered the shop to make a trifling purchase.

"And how are you getting on upstairs?" negligently asked Monsieur Ramin.

"Worse and worse, my good sir," she sighed. "We have rheumatic pains, which make us often use expressions the reverse of Christianlike, and yet nothing can induce us to see either the lawyer or the priest; the gout is getting nearer to our stomach every day, and still we go on talking about the strength of our constitution. Oh, sir, if you have any influence with us, do, pray do, tell us how wicked it is to die without making one's will or confessing one's sins."

"I shall go up this very evening," ambiguously replied Monsieur Ramin.

He kept his promise, and found Monsieur Bonelle in bed, groaning with pain and in the worst of tempers.

"What poisoning doctor did you send?" he asked, with an ireful glance. "I want no doctor; I am not ill. I will not follow his prescription; he forbade me to eat. I *will* eat."

"He is a very clever man," said the visitor. "He told me that never in the whole course of his experience has he met with what he called so much 'resisting power' as exists in your frame. He asked me if you were not of a long-lived race."

"That is as people may judge," replied Monsieur Bonelle. "All I can say is that my grandfather died at ninety, and my father at eighty-six."

"The doctor owned that you had a wonderfully strong constitution."

"Who said I hadn't?" exclaimed the invalid feebly.

"You may rely on it, you would preserve your health better if you had not the trouble of these vexatious lodgers. Have you thought about the life annuity?" said Ramin as carelessly as he could, considering how near the matter was to his hopes and wishes.

"Why, I have scruples," returned Bonelle, coughing. "I do not wish to take you in. My longevity would be the ruin of you."

"To meet that difficulty," quickly replied the mercer, "we can reduce the interest."

"But I must have high interest," placidly returned Monsieur Bonelle.

Ramin, on hearing this, burst into a loud fit of laughter, called Monsieur Bonelle a sly old fox, gave him a poke in the ribs, which made the old man cough for five minutes, and then proposed that they should talk it over some other day. The mercer left Monsieur Bonelle in the act of protesting that he felt as strong as a man of forty.

Monsieur Ramin felt in no hurry to conclude the proposed agreement. "The later one begins to pay, the better," he said, as he descended the stairs.

Days passed on, and the negotiation made no way. It struck the observant tradesman that all was not right. Old Marguerite several times refused to admit him, declaring her master was asleep: there was something mysterious and forbidding in her manner that seemed to Monsieur Ramin very ominous. At length a sudden thought occurred to him: the housekeeper—wishing to

become her master's heir—had heard his scheme and opposed it. On the very day that he arrived at this conclusion, he met a lawyer, with whom he had formerly had some transactions, coming down the staircase. The sight sent a chill through the mercer's commercial heart, and a presentiment—one of those presentiments that seldom deceive—told him it was too late. He had, however, the fortitude to abstain from visiting Monsieur Bonelle until evening came; when he went up, resolved to see him in spite of all Marguerite might urge. The door was half-open and the old housekeeper stood talking on the landing to a middle-aged man in a dark cassock.

"It is all over! The old witch has got the priests at him," thought Ramin, inwardly groaning at his own folly in allowing himself to be forestalled.

"You cannot see Monsieur to-night," sharply said Marguerite, as he attempted to pass her.

"Alas! is my excellent friend so very ill?" asked Ramin in a mournful tone.

"Sir," eagerly said the clergyman, catching him by the button of his coat, "if you are indeed the friend of that unhappy man, do seek to bring him into a more suitable frame of mind. I have seen many dying men, but never so much obstinacy, never such infatuated belief in the duration of life."

"Then you think he really *is* dying?" asked Ramin; and, in spite of the melancholy accent he endeavored to assume, there was something so peculiar in his tone, that the priest looked at him very fixedly as he slowly replied,

"Yes, sir, I think he is."

"Ah!" was all Monsieur Ramin said; and as the clergyman had now relaxed his hold of the button, Ramin passed in spite of the remonstrances of Marguerite, who rushed after the priest. He found Monsieur Bonelle still in bed and in a towering rage.

"Oh! Ramin, my friend," he groaned, "never take a housekeeper, and never let her know you have any property. They are harpies, Ramin,—harpies! such a day as I have had; first, the lawyer, who comes to write down 'my last testamentary dispositions,' as he calls them; then the priest, who gently hints that I am a dying man. Oh, what a day!"

"And *did* you make your will, my excellent friend?" softly asked Monsieur Ramin, with a keen look.

"Make my will!" indignantly exclaimed the old man; "make

my will! what do you mean, sir? do you mean to say I am dying?"

"Heaven forbid!" piously ejaculated Ramin.

"Then why do you ask me if I have been making my will?" angrily resumed the old man. He then began to be extremely abusive.

"My dear friend," at length said Ramin, on perceiving that the old gentleman had fairly exhausted himself and was lying panting on his back, "you are indeed a lamentable instance of the lengths to which the greedy lust of lucre will carry our poor human nature. It is really distressing to see Marguerite, a faithful, attached servant, suddenly converted into a tormenting harpy by the prospect of a legacy! Lawyers and priests flock around you like birds of prey, drawn hither by the scent of gold! Oh, the miseries of having delicate health combined with a sound constitution and large property!"

"Ramin," groaned the old man, looking inquiringly into his visitor's face, "you are again going to talk to me about that annuity—I know you are!"

"My excellent friend, it is merely to deliver you from a painful position."

"I am sure, Ramin, you think in your soul I am dying," whimpered Monsieur Bonelle.

"Absurd, my dear sir. Dying? I will prove to you that you have never been in better health. In the first place you feel no pain."

"Excepting from rheumatism," groaned Monsieur Bonelle.

"Rheumatism! who ever died of rheumatism? and if that be all——"

"No, it is not all," interrupted the old man with great irritability; "what would you say to the gout getting higher and higher up every day?"

"The gout is rather disagreeable, but if there is nothing else——"

"Yes, there is something else," sharply said Monsieur Bonelle. "There is an asthma that will scarcely let me breathe, and a racking pain in my head that does not allow me a moment's ease. But if you think I am dying, Ramin, you are quite mistaken."

"No doubt, my dear friend, no doubt; but in the meanwhile, suppose we talk of this annuity. Shall we say one thousand francs a year?"

"What?" asked Bonelle, looking at him very fixedly.



"My dear friend, I mistook; I meant two thousand francs per annum," hurriedly rejoined Ramin.

Monsieur Bonelle closed his eyes, and appeared to fall into a gentle slumber. The mercer coughed; the sick man never moved.

"Monsieur Bonelle."

No reply.

"My excellent friend."

Utter silence.

"Are you asleep?"

A long pause.

"Well, then, what do you say to three thousand?"

Monsieur Bonelle opened his eyes.

"Ramin," said he, sententiously, "you are a fool; the house brings me in four thousand as it is."

This was quite false, and the mercer knew it; but he had his own reasons for wishing to seem to believe it true.

"Good Heavens!" said he, with an air of great innocence, "who could have thought it, and the lodgers constantly running away. Four thousand? Well, then you shall have four thousand."

Monsieur Bonelle shut his eyes once more, and murmured, "The mere rental—nonsense!" He then folded his hands on his breast, and appeared to compose himself to sleep.

"Oh, what a sharp man of business he is!" Ramin said admiringly: but for once omnipotent flattery failed in its effect: "So acute!" continued he with a stealthy glance at the old man, who remained perfectly unmoved. "I see you will insist upon making it the other five hundred francs."

Monsieur Ramin said this as if five thousand five hundred francs had already been mentioned, and was the very summit of Monsieur Bonelle's ambition. But the ruse failed in its effect; the sick man never so much as stirred.

"But, my dear friend," urged Monsieur Ramin in a tone of feeling remonstrance, "there is such a thing as being too sharp, too acute. How can you expect that I shall give you more when your constitution is so good, and you are to be such a long liver?"

"Yes, but I may be carried off one of these days," quietly observed the old man, evidently wishing to turn the event of his own death to account.

"Indeed, and I hope so," muttered the mercer, who was getting very ill-tempered.

"You see," soothingly continued Bonelle, "you are so good a man of business, Ramin, that you will double the actual value of the house in no time. I am a quiet, easy person, indifferent to money; otherwise this house would now bring me in eight thousand at the very least."

"Eight thousand!" indignantly exclaimed the mercer. "Monsieur Bonelle, you have no conscience. Come now, my dear friend, do be reasonable. Six thousand francs a year (I don't mind saying six) is really a very handsome income for a man of your quiet habits. Come, be reasonable." But Monsieur Bonelle turned a deaf ear to reason, and closed his eyes once more. What between opening and shutting them for the next quarter of an hour, he at length induced Monsieur Ramin to offer him seven thousand francs.

"Very well, Ramin, agreed," he quietly said; "you have made an unconscionable bargain." To this succeeded a violent fit of coughing.

As Ramin unlocked the door to leave, he found old Marguerite, who had been listening all the time, ready to assail him with a torrent of whispered abuse for duping her "poor, dear, innocent old master into such a bargain." The mercer bore it all very patiently; he could make allowances for her excited feelings, and only rubbed his hands and bade her a jovial good evening.

The agreement was signed on the following day, to the indignation of old Marguerite, and the mutual satisfaction of the parties concerned.

Every one admired the luck and shrewdness of Ramin, for the old man every day was reported worse; and it was clear to all that the first quarter of the annuity would never be paid. Marguerite, in her wrath, told the story as a grievance to every one: people listened, shook their heads, and pronounced Monsieur Ramin to be a deuced clever fellow.

A month elapsed. As Ramin was coming down one morning from the attics, where he had been giving notice to a poor widow who had failed to pay her rent, he heard a light step on the stairs. Presently a sprightly gentleman, in buoyant health and spirits, wearing the form of Monsieur Bonelle, appeared. Ramin stood aghast.

"Well, Ramin," gayly said the old man, "how are you getting on? Have you been tormenting the poor widow upstairs? Why, man, we must live and let live!"

"Monsieur Bonelle," said the mercer, in a hollow tone; "may I ask where are your rheumatics?"

"Gone, my dear friend,—gone."

"And the gout that was creeping higher and higher every day," exclaimed Monsieur Ramin, in a voice of anguish.

"It went lower and lower, till it disappeared altogether," composedly replied Bonelle.

"And your asthma——"

"The asthma remains, but asthmatic people are proverbially long-lived. It is, I have been told, the only complaint that Methuselah was troubled with." With this Bonelle opened his door, shut it, and disappeared.

Ramin was transfixed on the stairs; petrified with intense disappointment, and a powerful sense of having been duped. When he was discovered, he stared vacantly, and raved about an Excellent Opportunity of taking his revenge.

The wonderful cure was the talk of the neighborhood, whenever Monsieur Bonelle appeared in the streets, jauntily flourishing his cane. In the first frenzy of his despair, Ramin refused to pay; he accused every one of having been in a plot to deceive him; he turned off Catherine and expelled his porter; he publicly accused the lawyer and priest of conspiracy; brought an action against the doctor, and lost it. He had another brought against him for violently assaulting Marguerite in which he was cast in heavy damages. Monsieur Bonelle did not trouble himself with useless remonstrances, but when his annuity was refused, employed such good legal arguments, as the exasperated mercer could not possibly resist.

Ten years have elapsed, and M. M. Ramin and Bonelle still live on. For a house which would have been dear at fifty thousand francs, the draper has already handed over seventy thousand.

The last accounts of the victim of Excellent Opportunities represent him as being gradually worn down with disappointment. There seems every probability of his being the first to leave the world; for Bonelle is heartier than ever.





## THE TORTURE BY HOPE\*

By  
VILLIERS DE L'ISLE-ADAM

*Famous Story Series*



ANY years ago, as evening was closing in, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, sixth prior of the Dominicans of Segovia, and third Grand Inquisitor of Spain, followed by a *fra redemptor*, and preceded by two familiars of the Holy Office, the latter carrying lanterns, made their way to a subterranean dungeon. The bolt of a massive door creaked, and they entered a mephitic *in-pace*, where the dim light revealed between rings fastened to the wall, a blood-stained rack, a brazier, and a jug. On a pile of straw, loaded with fetters and his neck encircled by an iron carcan, sat a haggard man, of uncertain age, clothed in rags.

This prisoner was no other than Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, a Jew of Arragon, who—accused of usury and pitiless scorn for the poor—had been daily subjected to torture for more than a year. Yet “his blindness was as dense as his hide,” and he had refused to abjure his faith.

Proud of a filiation dating back thousands of years, proud of his ancestors—for all Jews worthy of the name are vain of their blood—he descended Talmudically from Othoniel and consequently from Ipsiboa, the wife of the last judge of Israel, a circumstance which had sustained his courage amid incessant torture. With tears in his eyes at the thought of this resolute soul rejecting salvation, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, approaching the shuddering rabbi, addressed him as follows:

“My son, rejoice: your trials here below are about to **end**.

\* Adapted from the French, for Short Stories, by Mary J. Safford.—Copyrighted.

If in the presence of such obstinacy I was forced to permit, with deep regret, the use of great severity, my task of fraternal correction has its limits. You are the fig-tree which, having failed so many times to bear fruit, at last withered, but God alone can judge your soul. Perhaps Infinite Mercy will shine upon you at the last moment! We must hope so. There are examples. So sleep in peace to-night. To-morrow you will be included in the *auto da fé*: that is, you will be exposed to the *quemadero*, the symbolical flames of the Everlasting Fire: it burns, as you know, only at a distance, my son; and Death is at least two hours (often three) in coming, on account of the wet, iced bandages, with which we protect the heads and hearts of the condemned. There will be forty-three of you. Placed in the last row, you will have time to invoke God and offer to Him this baptismal of fire, which is of the Holy Spirit. Hope in the Light, and rest."

With these words, having signed to his companions to unchain the prisoner, the prior tenderly embraced him. Then came the turn of the *fra redemptor*, who, in a low tone, entreated the Jew's forgiveness for what he had made him suffer for the purpose of redeeming him; then the two familiars silently kissed him. This ceremony over, the captive was left, solitary and bewildered, in the darkness.

Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, with parched lips and visage worn by suffering, at first gazed at the closed door with vacant eyes. Closed? The word unconsciously roused a vague fancy in his mind, the fancy that he had seen for an instant the light of the lanterns through a chink between the door and the wall. A morbid idea of hope, due to the weakness of his brain, stirred his whole being. He dragged himself toward the strange *appearance*. Then, very gently and cautiously, slipping one finger into the crevice, he drew the door toward him. Marvelous! By an extraordinary accident the familiar who closed it had turned the huge key an instant before it struck the stone casing, so that the rusty bolt not having entered the hole, the door again rolled on its hinges.

The rabbi ventured to glance outside. By the aid of a sort of luminous dusk he distinguish at first a semi-circle of walls indented by winding-stairs; and opposite to him, at the top of five or six stone steps, a sort of black portal, opening into an immense corridor, whose first arches only were visible from below.

Stretching himself flat he crept to the threshold. Yes, it was

really a corridor, but endless in length. A wan light illumined it: lamps suspended from the vaulted ceiling lightened at intervals the dull hue of the atmosphere—the distance was veiled in shadow. Not a single door appeared in the whole extent! Only on one side, the left, heavily grated loop-holes, sunk in the walls, admitted a light which must be that of evening, for crimson bars at intervals rested on the flags of the pavement. What a terrible silence! Yet, yonder, at the far end of that passage there might be a doorway of escape! The Jew's vacillating hope was tenacious, for it was *the last*.

Without hesitating, he ventured on the flags, keeping close under the loop-holes, trying to make himself part of the blackness of the long walls. He advanced slowly, dragging himself along on his breast, forcing back the cry of pain when some raw wound sent a keen pang through his whole body.

Suddenly the sound of a sandalled foot approaching reached his ears. He trembled violently, fear stifled him, his sight grew dim. Well, it was over, no doubt. He pressed himself into a niche and, half lifeless with terror, waited.

It was a familiar hurrying along. He passed swiftly by, holding in his clenched hand an instrument of torture—a frightful figure—and vanished. The suspense which the rabbi had endured seemed to have suspended the functions of life, and he lay nearly an hour unable to move. Fearing an increase of tortures if he were captured, he thought of returning to his dungeon. But the old hope whispered in his soul that divine *perhaps*, which comforts us in our sorest trials. A miracle had happened. He could doubt no longer. He began to crawl toward the chance of escape. Exhausted by suffering and hunger, trembling with pain, he pressed onward. The sepulchral corridor seemed to lengthen mysteriously, while he, still advancing, gazed into the gloom where there *must* be some avenue of escape.

Oh! oh! He again heard footsteps, but this time they were slower, more heavy. The white and black forms of two inquisitors appeared, emerging from the obscurity beyond. They were conversing in low tones, and seemed to be discussing some important subject, for they were gesticulating vehemently.

At this spectacle Rabbi Aser Abarbanel closed his eyes: his heart beat so violently that it almost suffocated him; his rags were damp with the cold sweat of agony; he lay motionless by the wall, his mouth wide open, under the rays of a lamp, praying to the God of David.

Just opposite to him the two inquisitors paused under the light of the lamp—doubtless owing to some accident due to the course of their argument. One, while listening to his companion, gazed at the rabbi! And, beneath the look—whose absence of expression the hapless man did not at first notice—he fancied he again felt the burning pincers scorch his flesh, he was to be once more a living wound. Fainting, breathless, with fluttering eyelids, he shivered at the touch of the monk's floating robe. But—strange yet natural fact—the inquisitor's gaze was evidently that of a man deeply absorbed in his intended reply, engrossed by what he was hearing; they were fixed—and seemed to look at the Jew *without seeing him*.

In fact, after the lapse of a few minutes, the two gloomy figures slowly pursued their way, still conversing in low tones, toward the place whence the prisoner had come; HE HAD NOT BEEN SEEN! Amid the horrible confusion of the rabbi's thoughts, the idea darted through his brain: "Can I be already dead that they did not see me?" A hideous impression roused him from his lethargy: in looking at the wall against which his face was pressed, he imagined he beheld two fierce eyes watching him! He flung his head back in a sudden frenzy of fright, his hair fairly bristling! Yet, no! No. His hand groped over the stones: it was the *reflection* of the inquisitor's eyes, still retained in his own, which had been refracted from two spots on the wall.

Forward! He must hasten toward that goal which he fancied (absurdly, no doubt) to be deliverance, towards the darkness from which he was now barely thirty paces distant. He pressed forward faster on his knees, his hands, at full length, dragging himself painfully along, and soon entered the dark portion of this terrible corridor.

Suddenly the poor wretch felt a gust of cold air on the hand resting upon the flags; it came from under the little door to which the two walls led.

Oh, Heaven, if that door should open outward. Every nerve in the miserable fugitive's body thrilled with hope. He examined it from top to bottom, though scarcely able to distinguish its outlines in the surrounding darkness. He passed his hand over it: no bolt, no lock! A latch! He started up, the latch yielded to the pressure of his thumb: the door silently swung open before him.

"HALLELUIA!" murmured the rabbi in a transport of gratitude as, standing on the threshold, he beheld the scene before him.

The door had opened into the gardens, above which arched a starlit sky, into spring, liberty, life! It revealed the neighboring fields, stretching toward the sierras, whose sinuous blue lines were relieved against the horizon. Yonder lay freedom! Oh, to escape! He would journey all night through the lemon groves, whose fragrance reached him. Once in the mountains and he was safe! He inhaled the delicious air; the breeze revived him, his lungs expanded! He felt in his swelling heart the *Veni foràs* of Lazarus! And to thank once more the God who had bestowed this mercy upon him, he extended his arms, raising his eyes toward Heaven. It was an ecstasy of joy!

Then he fancied he saw the shadow of his arms approach him—fancied that he felt these shadowy arms inclose, embrace him—and that he was pressed tenderly to some one's breast. A tall figure actually did stand directly before him. He lowered his eyes—and remained motionless, gasping for breath, dazed, with fixed eyes, fairly driveling with terror.

Horror! He was in the clasp of the Grand Inquisitor himself, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, who gazed at him with tearful eyes, like a good shepherd who had found his stray lamb.

The dark-robed priest pressed the hapless Jew to his heart with so fervent an outburst of love, that the edges of the monochal hair-cloth rubbed the Dominican's breast. And while Aser Abarbanel with protruding eyes gasped in agony in the ascetic's embrace, vaguely comprehending that *all the phases of this fatal evening were only a pre-arranged torture, that of HOPE*, the Grand Inquisitor, with an accent of touching reproach and a look of consternation, murmured in his ear, his breath parched and burning from long fasting:

"What, my son! . On the eve, perchance, of salvation—you wished to leave us?"





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August, 1894

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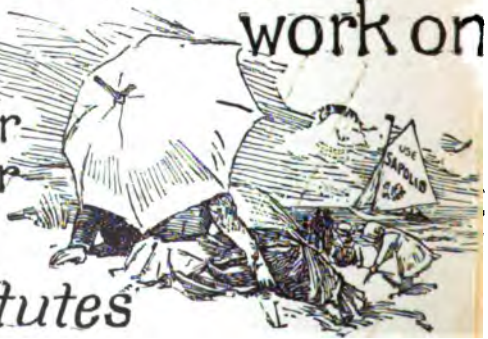


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### COINING HIS BRAINS \*

BY EDWARD PAYSON JACKSON

*Author of "A Demigod," "Character-Building," etc.*

THE dinners of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club were as far above ordinary club-dinners as the Music Hall symphony concerts are above average theatrical overtures and interludes. The uneducated palate could no more appreciate their delicate savors than the uncultured ear can appreciate Listz's scores executed by Paderewski. The vulgar ideal of a fine club-dinner is one which

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costs enough per plate to support a country clergyman's table for a week; one like those which aldermen and councilmen enjoy at the city's expense, and from which they rise with overloaded stomachs and apoplectic faces.

The D. F. N. Club was composed, not of gluttons, but of *gourmands*; not of drunkards, but of *bon-vivants* in the most æsthetic sense of the term. When they had finished sipping their coffee and had lighted their cigars, their hearts were light, and their spirits gay, with an exhilaration which heightened instead of dulling their wits for the feast of reason which was to follow.

The president, Mason Macknight, had been chosen, not on account of any special executive ability, but simply because he was the most agreeable and popular fellow, and the best after-dinner speaker in the club—albeit he was so poor in worldly possessions that he could have ill afforded to retain his membership if the club had not frequently presented him with liberal testimonials of their gratitude for his “inestimable services.” He was bright-looking and handsome, he sang a sentimental or a humorous song with effect, and he was not only an entertaining talker, but, what is even more essential to popularity, an appreciative listener.

At the closing dinner of the season, in his valedictory and introductory remarks before presenting the speaker of the evening, he outdid himself, and so deepened the general admiration that he was unanimously re-elected, in spite of a prevailing sentiment in favor of rapid rotation in office.

I have a vivid recollection of that dinner, not only on account of the brilliant appearance which the president made, but because I was down for a speech, and more particularly because of the strange events which followed.

I am a little crotchety about always occupying the same seat at table. Even when I take only two successive meals at a hotel I feel imposed upon if the seat assigned me at first is changed at the second. This foible of mine was pretty well understood at the club, so, excepting for a little temporary joke, one particular chair was as sacredly reserved for me as the president's and distinguished guests' chairs were reserved for them. Upon entering the hall on this occasion, however, I found a stranger in my accustomed place. I glanced quickly around for the sly wink or the guilty look which should reveal the joker, but no one responded, and I took the next chair with as good a grace as possible. The

stranger soon opened conversation with me and proved exceedingly affable, although no one in his vicinity seemed disposed to acknowledge acquaintance with him. His personal appearance was striking to a degree. He was pale, even to ghastliness, the effect being greatly heightened by coal-black hair and moustache and the most piercing black eyes I have ever seen.



In a little while a note was handed me from the president, requesting me to send him the name of my "friend." I replied that I did not know; that the gentleman was not present by my invitation.

While I was refolding the paper, the stranger handed the waiter a card, which, with my reply, was delivered to the president. I saw a look of surprise and perplexity pass over Mac-

knight's face, but he gave the stranger a most courteous bow, which fairly satisfied myself and apparently several others who had been casting inquiring glances in my direction. Still I could not help wondering who and what my neighbor was, and why he should be present at a strictly private—I may say, exclusive—gathering, under such very singular circumstances.



As I have said, I was down for a speech. This fact prevented me from sustaining my share of the conversation with my neighbor in a manner satisfactory to myself, however it may have been to him. I had made two or three speeches on previous occasions. I had elaborated them with much travail, committed them thoroughly to memory, word for word, and, much to my surprise and secret satisfaction, had won the reputa-

tion of being an easy, off-hand speaker. If my club-mates had only known what those "off-hand" remarks had cost me, their applause would surely have been changed to pity!

"And now, gentlemen," said President Macknight, rising with the genial smile with which he habitually haled his helpless victim to the rostrum, "I have the pleasure of presenting to you one who, etc., etc.—one whose faithful and efficient services as your secretary have, etc., etc.—one who is widely known, both within and without our circle, as etc., etc.—one, in fine, who loves to talk, but not so well as you love to listen. 'If you have tears, prepare to shed them now';—if you have laughs prepare to laugh them now. Gentlemen, our esteemed secretary, J. Wilkins Dobson."

With expectations thus aroused, all turned their beaming faces towards me, prepared to laugh or weep at my first sally. From the beginning of the feast I had been so ill at ease at the certainty of what was in store for me, that I had not only made, I fear, but a poor impression upon my brilliant neighbor as a conversationalist, but I had really enjoyed none of the various dishes which had been set before me. So far as my consciousness was concerned, they might have been the plainest of fare, instead of the daintiest. All through the president's introduction my heart had been thumping so obstreperously that I thought it must be heard even above his resonant voice, and I felt sure that my face must betray my inward agitation. I had carefully committed my remarks, however, and I arose with what I felt was an air of entire self-possession. I was received with generous applause. Several witticisms which I had laboriously contrived, and which fortunately seemed inspired by what the president had just said, evoked satisfactory responses.

Once only did I hesitate. Oh, what a moment was that! For the life of me I could not think what I had arranged to say next, and such was the paralyzing effect of the lapse that I could no more substitute anything than I could fly.

The smoke-filled hall, the president, the long tables, and the smiling or coldly critical faces around them, began to spin before my eyes. My tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth. I took my glass of water, and was in the act of putting it to my parched lips, when I heard a whisper from the stranger at my side. Though it was doubtless inaudible to others, it reached my ear, clearly and distinctly, uttering the very words with which my forgotten sentence began! In the joy of my rescue I did not

stop to think of the seeming miracle, but, satisfying myself by a swift glance around me that my dilemma had not been generally discovered, I forged ahead, and finally took my seat amid even louder applause than that which had greeted the beginning of my address.

"Dobson, my boy," said my friend Knowlton, who sat at my left, patting me facetiously on the back, "you spoke your little piece *well*. How many rehearsals did you have?"

"You give me credit for wonderful prophetic power," I retorted



scornfully, "if you think I knew what the president was going to say in introducing me!"

And yet my conscience did not wince.

"You *did* turn it cleverly, old fellow," answered Knowlton, "and all on the spur of the moment, too. I would give ten thousand dollars this moment, if I had your gift of impromptu speech!"

"Bah! You would do nothing of the sort. It's easy enough if one only thinks so. It's just like swimming—all you have to do is to strike out boldly, not caring whether you sink or swim."

"But suppose I should sink?"



"Oh," said I, carelessly, "there's no danger, if you only keep on kicking."

Here, I confess, I began to feel some inward prickings, as well as some slight embarrassment lest the stranger on my right might have overheard my complacent words. Suddenly the recollection of the assistance he had so mysteriously given me rushed into my mind. In my elation at my success I had entirely forgotten it. I felt my cheeks turn scarlet. Facing him shame-facedly, I said,

"I beg to thank you, sir, for the service, the—ah—a wonderful service, you rendered me in my extremity. I must confess that it entirely passes my comprehension. May I ask you how you knew so exactly what I wished to say?"

"You did *not* say all you had prepared, even with my help," he replied, coolly, watching my face to note the effect of his words. "You omitted two whole pages of your manuscript—those in which you combat the popular notion that the *dolce far niente* tends to the atrophy of real strength and energy."

So I did! And yet I was absolutely sure that no eyes but my own had ever seen my manuscript. I had, of course, heard and read a good deal about what is called mind-reading, but I had always relegated the whole matter to the limbo of fortune-telling and all other superstitions or fraudulent nonsense. I stared at the stranger in helpless amazement.

"Sir," I said at length, "will you have the goodness to explain this most astonishing mystery?"

He smiled, displaying a row of narrow, glistening white teeth. "This is hardly a favorable opportunity," he replied. "If you and your president will invite me to one of your little parlors after the banquet, I may be able to interest you."

"Oh, ah, yes," said Macknight, taking the stranger's hand, "I remember you *now*, Mr. Pilgrim—and the standing invitation I gave you to the hospitalities of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club."

Mr. Pilgrim bowed and smiled. "And do you remember a certain bargain you said you would like to make?"

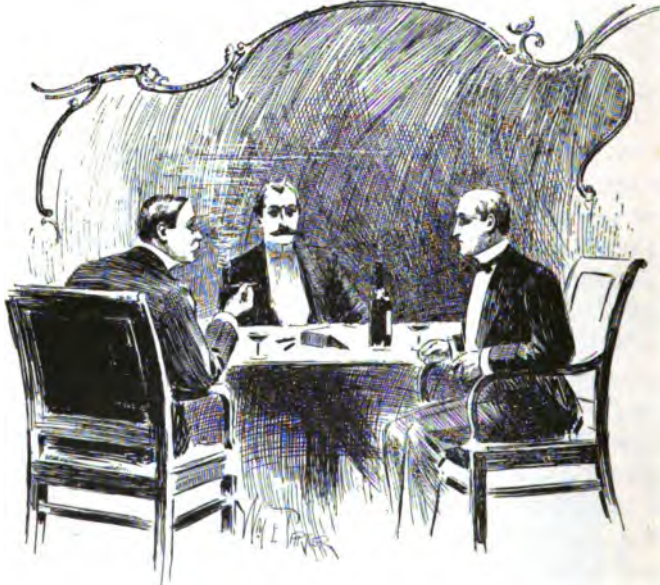
"No; I don't recall anything of that sort. What was it?"

"You made no definite proposition. You merely expressed a desire to exchange some things you possessed for others which you did not possess."

"Oh," laughed Macknight, "there's nothing strange or un-

usual in that. I'm always expressing desires. I'm one of those uneasy mortals who never *are*, 'but always to *be* blest.'"

When we three were cosily ensconced in a little card-room in the third story of the club-house, and were discussing our champagne and cigars, we began to speak of various indifferent mat-



ters, although both Macknight and I were burning with impatience to hear our guest's explanation of his apparently miraculous power.

At length Macknight said to me, "So that brilliant effort of yours was not impromptu, after all?"

The consciousness that any attempt at concealment would be futile before the piercing black eyes of our strange guest, caused me to throw all reserve to the winds. I made a clean breast of my vain pretensions to the easy self-possession of the born extemporaneous orator. I told how, on receiving my invitation to address the club a week before, I had lost no time in beginning the preparation of my "desultory remarks;" how I had studied my encyclopædia for the pat allusions which had won me so much applause, and a collection of modern Joe Millers for the best of the jokes which had evoked so much laughter.

"But those admirable turns you made to my best points in introducing you," urged Macknight; "those were impromptu, at least."

"Not at all. I weighed very carefully the probabilities. I knew that you would allude to every one of those little incidents connected with my secretaryship, and I thought it more than likely that you would indulge in just the flattery you did indulge in. If you did not happen to do so, I had so worded my speech that I could omit those special replies without in the least interfering with the connection of thought."

"Well, you *did* take pains!" exclaimed Macknight, setting his glass down on the table with dangerous force. "I shouldn't suppose you would attach importance enough to a mere after-dinner speech to put so much work into it. After all, what is there depending on it?"

"Heaven only knows! I only know, as Mr. Pilgrim doubtless does also, that the very prospect of speaking in public sets me into a shiver of dread. At the same time I feel an irresistible impulse to respond to every call, and to shine among the best of them. I have often wondered whether others who succeed as I sometimes do, are affected as I am. How is it with you, Macknight, who always succeed so immeasurably better than I, or, for that matter, than any other man in the club? Don't you ever feel any trepidation when you are about to face hundreds of critical auditors, who will note every little lapse of logic or wit and every little faltering of speech?"

Macknight reflected. "Well, no, Dobson, to be perfectly candid, I can't say that I do."

I glanced involuntarily at Mr. Pilgrim. As if in reply to my unspoken question, he said instantly:

"Your president is right. Not that his words need confirmation, of course, but, as he seemed a little in doubt himself, I will say in his behalf that he is as perfectly at his ease before any audience, however large or critical, as he is at this moment before us two."

Macknight looked at him as if uncertain whether to be surprised or only complimented. At length he said:

"Thank you. Mr. Dobson has told me of the mysterious and very opportune assistance you gave him. We are both waiting with the utmost impatience to hear your explanation of your marvellous power."

Again Mr. Pilgrim displayed his glittering teeth, scarcely more white than his face. "You do not believe in the power of mind-reading, which many quite respectable persons of to-day claim to possess?"

"I *had* not believed in it—until to-night, at all events," I answered.

"No," added Macknight, "I never could believe in it more than in any other supernatural power claimed by mere mortals."

"But who has the right to say that there is anything supernatural in it?" retorted Mr. Pilgrim. He then proceeded gravely to expound the general theory and practice of hypnotism as taught by its professors; arguing that the art of mind-reading was closely allied, and finishing with the emphatic declaration that both were accomplished facts, and that he was simply one of their exponents.

"But," I objected, "what you did in my own case was not mind-reading. That which you read was not in my mind at all. I would have given a thousand dollars, at that fearful moment, if it had been there!"

"Shall I consider you in my debt to that amount?" asked Mr. Pilgrim, with his sinister smile. "You mistake, however, in saying that it was not in your mind," he went on, gravely. "It *was* there. The only trouble was, that the electric current, so to speak, of association, was for the instant broken. All I did was to close the connection."

"A new explanation of memory-lapses," observed Macknight, "and a very good one."

"No," replied Mr. Pilgrim, "not new. It is as old as the science of psychology."

"Well, a new illustration, then."

"No, not even that."

Notwithstanding Mr. Pilgrim's apparent earnestness and sincerity, neither Macknight nor I was convinced, either of the soundness of his conclusions or of his own actual belief in them. His appearance and manner were so uncanny, especially his smile, that, in spite of our reason and common sense, we could not avoid an uneasy feeling that there was something in our guest either above or below Nature.

"If Knowlton had possessed this wonderful power," I remarked to Macknight, "he would scarcely have told me that he would give ten thousand dollars for my gift of impromptu speech. I can truly say, however, that I would give more than that if I really had what he thinks I have."

"And what would you give," asked Mr. Pilgrim quickly, "for the oratorical talents of your president?"

"Twenty thousand!" replied I, bringing my fist down on the table, "this instant!"

"You would be a fool!" exclaimed Macknight. "I would sell what little knack I possess at spouting for a quarter of that sum!"

"I only wish I could take you!"

"I only wish you could!"

"You place rather a low value upon your intellectual gifts," said I.

"On the contrary, I think I have set the price exorbitantly high. Five thousand dollars may mean very little to you, but think what it means to me! Comfort, independence, perfect serenity of mind, for a whole year! How often I have wished that I had been allowed some choice in the gifts which Nature and Fortune bestowed upon me! There would have been a different assortment, I can tell you!"

Mr. Pilgrim bent forward eagerly. "Suppose Nature and Fortune should grant you your choice *now*. What would you choose?"

"Ah, 'Goods exchanged on application at the office,'" laughed Macknight, "very good. Well, the very first thing I should ask for would be money—and plenty of it."

"And what would you be willing to exchange for money?"

"Let me see. Well, there's the knack at impromptu speaking which you have credited me with. I would give up that without the least hesitation."

"Yes, and what else?"

"H'm, well, to tell the truth, I don't know of much else that would be worth offering."

"Phew!" exclaimed I, seizing the opportunity to praise my friend's versatility, "what of your conversational and epistolary powers, your genius for music and painting, your knack at verse-making, your natural skill at billiards, whist, and chess—your—your elegant penmanship?"

At this feeble anticlimax both my auditors burst into a laugh.

"I would be willing to throw in that last article *gratis*," said Macknight.

"A man who appreciates his gifts so little as you do, doesn't deserve to have them!" I retorted indignantly.

"Pshaw! Even granting that I possess all the elegant accomplishments you have just inventoried, what are they worth to a poverty-stricken wretch like me? Will they pay my landlord or

my tailor? Doesn't every successful man—successful, I mean, in the financial sense, the only sense recognized—look down on me with indulgent pity so long as I don't owe him a dollar, and with dislike and contempt when I do? There's that last precious accomplishment you mentioned, for instance,—my 'elegant penmanship.' Of what earthly value is that to a man who can't draw his check for a hundred dollars? The chicken-track style, which usually ornaments your twenty-thousand dollar drafts, is far more to my taste."

"What would you sell your elegant hand for, in cash?" asked Mr. Pilgrim, in a business-like manner.

"For anything I could get?"

"Would you take a thousand dollars?"

"*Would* I! Give me the chance and see!"

Mr. Pilgrim produced a note-book and a fountain pen, wrote rapidly on a leaf, tore it out and handed it to Macknight. "Will you sign that?"

Macknight read:

BOSTON, June 6th, 1890.

"In consideration of the sum of One Thousand Dollars received from Peter Pilgrim, I hereby consent to give up all grace and beauty in my style of penmanship—retaining only its present legibility."

"I'd sign it in an instant if it would do any good," he sighed.

Mr. Pilgrim laid a bank-note on the table. "There's your money."

We both stared. My flesh began to creep.

"Look here," blurted Macknight. "I don't know how Dobson feels. He stood the mind-reading test with a good deal more equanimity than I could,—but *this* is— Who *are* you, sir, any way?"

"It doesn't matter who I am. You have made an agreement. Are you going to stand by it?"

Macknight swallowed another glass of wine. "Hang it, here goes! Macbeth boasted that he dared what man dared. Macknight will beat Macbeth!"

He took the pen and wrote. As he did so, his face, which had been flushed, turned deathly pale, and his eyes seemed starting from their sockets.

Mr. Pilgrim took the paper. His teeth gleamed in a satisfied smile. "Would you recognize that hand?" he asked, handing it to me.

I could have sworn to it at a court of justice. And yet it was the most awkward scrawl I ever saw outside of a primary schoolboy's copybook or a legal document.

"Would you mind signing your name as witness?" pursued Mr. Pilgrim, addressing me.

My power of resistance seemed paralyzed. Mechanically I signed my name, half-expecting to see the miracle repeated; but, barring a little tremulousness due to my agitation of mind, my chirography was no poorer than usual.

"Thank you," said Mr. Pilgrim, carefully replacing the paper in his note-book. "Should Mr. Macknight wish any further business transactions with me, all he has to do is to write to the address on the card I sent to him."

When I awoke the next morning the whole affair seemed so unreal, so absolutely impossible, in fact, that I made up my mind it was either a hallucination attributable to too liberal an indulgence in champagne, or a cleverly-arranged hoax played upon me by Macknight and his friend. The more I thought of it, the more I felt inclined to the latter view of the case; although, of course, I was still mystified by the remarkable feat of mind-reading which had been performed in my behalf. A note received from Macknight by the morning's mail, in the same horrible hand I had seen last, would not have shaken my conviction in the least, if it had not been for one thing—it contained his check for two hundred dollars, a sum he had been owing me for more than a year. I confess I was considerably staggered by this circumstance, but vastly more so, a few days later, by the news that he had bought, for cash, a handsome cottage in the suburbs. After some further perplexity, my mind settled down upon the only reasonable conclusion possible. He had received a legacy and was continuing his hoax upon me.

The summer vacation passed, and the evening came for the first club-dinner of the next season. Macknight, in a fine new evening-suit, was in his place at the head of the table, but it required only a few moments for those in his immediate vicinity to discover that something unusual was the matter with him. Instead of keeping everybody in a tingle of exhilaration at his sallies, as usual, he was taciturn and sombre.

"Come, Macknight," said the vice-president, at last, "what ails you? You haven't said ten words since you came!"

The reply was so clumsy, so utterly stupid, that his neighbors

all looked at him and then at one another in astonishment. I left my seat, went to him, and said in a low tone:

"Don't for heaven's sake, keep up this thing any longer."

"Keep up what thing?"

"Acting like an idiot."

"Don't insult *me*, Dobson!" he returned, with a blank stare.

"I can buy *you* out, and a dozen more like you!"

I returned to my seat in disgust.

The cigars were lighted, the secretary's and treasurer's reports were read and approved, and the president arose to make his opening address.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I thank you for reëlecting me as the president of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club. I will try to discharge the duties of the position as well as I can. As an example of what I intend to do for you, I will ask the treasurer to read this."

The treasurer took the slip which the president handed to him, glanced at it, raised his eyebrows with an expression of great surprise and pleasure, and read:

"BOSTON, September 28, 1890.

"Berkely National Bank. Pay to the treasurer of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club Two Thousand Dollars.

"MASON MACKNIGHT."

Amid the hand-clapping that followed, the president sat down with a smile of imbecile complacency. When quiet had been restored, Knowlton moved that "the honored president's extremely liberal gift be accepted with the most cordial thanks of the club."

A dozen voices seconded the motion.

Macknight leaped up and began:

"Gentleman, you have heard the motion. As many of you as——"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted the vice-president, "for my dilatoriness. The president's rebuke is as just as it is delicate. As many of you as are in favor of the motion made by Mr. Knowlton will manifest it by saying 'Aye.' It is unanimously carried."

"And now," said a member at the foot of the table, "we are eagerly waiting for the rest of the president's speech."

"I have made my speech," replied Macknight. "I should suppose that two thousand dollars would—would——"

Here he actually broke down, unable even to finish his sen-



tence coherently. Quivering with shame for him, I arose in my place and said :

“The president would imply that ‘figures talk.’ I think we will all agree that they have spoken eloquently to-night. Your



secretary will record the inaugural address of this season as the most acceptable and weighty in the archives of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club.”

I never saw Mr. Pilgrim again. Who he was, whence he came, or whither he went, I never knew. Neither has my mind recovered entirely from the strain to which his mysterious dealings with my unhappy friend subjected it.

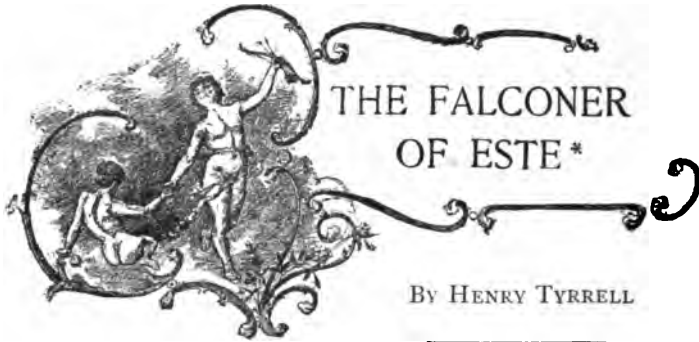
For two years Macknight lived in a style of magnificence which called forth only the wondering pity of his old acquaintances and the contemptuous pity of his new ones ; for his growing stupidity and grossness kept pace with his growing wealth. His resignation as president of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club followed as a matter of necessity, and, soon after, his expulsion, as a matter of equal necessity.

“Have you heard the latest about poor Macknight?” Knowlton asked me one day.

“No ; but I can imagine. Has he gone crazy altogether ?”

“Worse than that. He is in the W—— Lunatic Asylum.”

Ah, well, if the rest of us had his opportunity to transmute ourselves into gold, where should we stop ? Many a man coins body, heart, and brain without the help of Peter Pilgrim.



“Paganisme immortel, es-tu mort? On le dit.  
Mais Pan, tout bas, s'en moque et la Sirène en rit.”  
—Sainte-Beuve.



HER name was Nerina. It was Travers' first evening in Italy.

The end of May had brought the beginning of summer to those sub-tropical terraces of the Riviera, hung to the leeward of Alpine mountain walls, and caressed by the infinite turquoise-blue of the Mediterranean. Every southerly breeze was a foretaste of the sirocco. The routes glimmered white and dusty through the velvet-dark of the pines and lemon-groves, and the olive-trees looked like puffs of smoke on the hillsides already parched and brown. Even the palms, with the dry, metallic rustle of their yellowing fronds, sighed as of dead-season ennui and drought.

San Remo, in the daytime, wore that look of lovely desolation, which it is wont to assume after the breaking up of the winter colony. Travers, who had passed by Cannes, Nice and Monte Carlo with scarce a regret in his eagerness to cross the Italian frontier, paused now at the threshold of the promised land, because he had a letter of introduction from a Parisian artist friend, Lucien D'Aren, to present here.

The letter was addressed to the Count Chevandier-Waldron; but in reality, the visit was for the sake of a young woman, who, while serving in the capacity of governess to the old Count's two little grandsons, was, in point of fact, a kind of adopted daughter of the house. She was an Italian; but the history of her relation with the Chevandiers, Travers had never learned. D'Aren had more than once intimated that her family connec-

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tions in Italy were ancient and noble. It was at a reception in the Chevandiers' Paris hôtel that he had first met her, the autumn previous. He had run down to San Remo at Carnival time, some two months before the passing thither of his American friend. Now he was chained to the capital, having arrived at that critical point of his artistic career where the spark of patronage had at last faintly caught, and needed the most assiduous fanning to coax it into the promise of a comfortable surety. Hence, his commission to Travers, *passant*.

That this commission was of a delicate and somewhat equivocal nature the young American comprehended; but D'Aren had volunteered few specific confidences—disappointed, possibly, that they had not been asked. Being sufficiently occupied with affairs of his own, Travers did not avail himself of the privilege even of drawing conclusions as to those of his friend.

Having forwarded his letter, he received at his hotel, an hour later, an invitation to a kind of informal reception to be held at the Chevandier villa that same evening, as it chanced, in honor of a yachting party from Nice.

The daylight lingered one brief moment after sunset, with a parting look of ineffable tenderness upon the fair clime it was quitting, and then the twilight fell like a curtain, with the large, melting stars low-hung in an indigo-purple sky, and a kind of soft glimmering darkness enveloping the land without obscuring it. It all seemed strangely unreal to Travers, whose spirits rose to exultation as he sauntered up a palm-shaded avenue to the brightly illuminated pavilion on the embowered hillside, which was the Riviera home of the Chevandiers. It was a small but elegant structure, in the florid style of the country, with a broad terrace in front and a musky Eden of a garden fading into verdurous gloom behind.

Mandolin music rippled from a wide bay-window of the salon, where the vivacious old Count and his guests were sipping sherbet, chatting tête-à-tête, or flitting about the rooms with that delightful informality which seemed peculiar to the atmosphere. Apparently M. Chevandier was maintaining the hospitable illusion that the place belonged absolutely to his visitors. Half-a-dozen boulevardier-yachtsmen, two or three Englishmen, an Italian army Adonis in lieutenant's uniform, and a number of cosmopolitan young women dressed in pink and white, who discussed with their attendant duennas their various "systems" of playing roulette at Monte Carlo—these constituted the amiable company

with whom Travers suddenly found himself, he scarcely knew or cared how, upon terms of easy acquaintanceship.

Then he gained an opportunity to observe the Signorina herself, who had graciously acted as intermediary in the presentations.

Yes, she was beautiful, in the style cultivated by certain painters—Travers thought instantly of his friend's master, Lefebvre—whose work is intensely modern, yet strongly imbued with mystic and classical suggestion. Nerina's charm, however, so far as the physical element of it was concerned, was not too subtle or elusive. It must have impressed itself upon every observer irrespective of individual predilections. She represented neither of the familiar contrasted Italian types of vaporous blonde and raven brunette. Her complexion was a warm, bright olive pallor; her rich hair was dark brown and straight; her eyes, two liquid, shining orbs, that by daylight were probably violet-gray. She was slender and rather tall, and moved with the lithe, rapid grace of a wild creature. What she wore that evening Travers could not afterwards recall, save that it was a simply-made gown of some dark, soft, clinging stuff that seemed a part of the wearer herself rather than an artificial vestment.

Here, thought Travers, was a rare type—an anachronism—an exquisite surviving product of ages of luxury and refinement, perhaps of something more sinister. Her features, her entire individuality, bore in a singular degree the cast of that pride of race, that legendary hauteur, which the young American had first observed with an involuntary thrill of admiration amongst those stately women of Arles and Avignon, who claim descent from antique Rome and Greece.

A Mascagni waltz drew most of the party into its bewitching vortex, and Travers found himself gliding with the rest over the waxed oaken floors. This was the providential prelude to a turn in the garden, which needed not even to be intimated by a word, for Nerina was his partner; and a moment later they were alone in the myrtle-bowered paths, beacons, rather than illuminated, by Chinese lanterns hanging here and there, like incandescent fruit amongst spicy laurel-rose shrubbery.

Then, in her low, monotonous tones, yet with something of the delicious impetuosity of intimacy, she asked:

"Tell me what he said—Lucien, your friend. You have left him——"

"The day before yesterday, in Paris. Permit me—he can best speak for himself."

He gave her the letter which, not to be intrusted to the hazards of the regular post, had been placed in his hands for safe delivery into her own. She touched it to her lips, then, breaking the seal, hid the envelope away in her bosom, and paused to read the letter by the crimson light of a paper lantern hanging in one of the dense laurel-trees overarching the path.

Travers was more than content to stand awhile in contemplation of the picture, keeping at the same time a watchful eye in the direction of the house, so as to be on guard against a possible interruption. Finally he said, for want of something better to break the spell:

"This is indeed *sub rosa*!"

Lifting her eyes from the letter, she regarded him fixedly, and answered—mixing as usual an Italian word or two with her somewhat halting French:

"He speaks *molto bene* of you."

"Thanks!" Travers cried, joyously. "Do try and believe it. Lucien is the most charming fellow in the world, and deserves to be—as now I know he is—the happiest of men."

"He thinks of me sometimes?"

"More than sometimes. And it is *thinking*, with a difference."

"Then—he has told you much about me?"

"Not so much. I am speaking now on my own responsibility."

"He will be coming here," she continued, glancing again at the letter. "And you—how long shall you remain in San Remo?"

"Only until to-morrow morning."

Something like a sigh accompanied this declaration. What sudden determination prompted it Travers could not have explained, nor why the utterance of it caused him a feeling of relief.

They were now at the open window-door of the salon, having retraced their steps as other promenaders came into the garden. It was necessary merely to show themselves for a moment in the parlors, and exchange a word or two with the host and those about him, then the pair were at liberty to resume their interview *al fresco*. This time they continued their walk to the foot of the

garden, where a marble seat was placed in a dusky bower amidst a clump of pines and acacias.

"The attractions of San Remo, then, are so quickly exhausted?" she asked, as though there had been no break in the conversation.

"On the contrary, it is the seduction of the place that I fear. If I were to yield to it now, perhaps I should never get any further—and there *are* some other places in Italy that I had set my heart upon visiting."

"Ah, yes! You will go to Florence——"

From the shadowy acacias a bird's nocturne gushed forth in such a rapture of melody, that the girl's own kindred voice as suddenly ceased.

"There!" exclaimed her companion, at the fall of a cadence: "There is an example, now, of the fatal fascination to which a susceptible stranger is exposed here. That nightingale——"

"Oh, no!" she interrupted, laughingly, "it is not the nightingale. That is the *caponero*—our little Italian fauvette, with the black bonnet and the golden throat, who makes many sweet songs for which the master-singer gets credit. That is unjust, for the nightingale has gifts and glory enough of his own. Now, I will teach you to distinguish between them."

And forthwith she began imitating, in a sort of warbling whistle, the song of the bird in the acacias—so perfectly, that it seemed a continuation of that which had at first fallen so sweetly upon the dreamy darkness.

"And now," she continued, animated by her own ecstatic roudades, "you shall hear how the nightingale discourses. He doesn't repeat set phrases—he talks, improvises. He begins by coaxing you to listen, and then pours out his whole heart—so!"

It was indeed the nightingale's song, but with a soul in it, that she gave. Then she imitated the haunting cry of the owl, and half-a-dozen other birds,—

"most musical, most melancholy."

The performance of Nerina seemed really as marvellous as it was unique, and Travers scarcely knew how to express his appreciation and wonder.

"You are like the mocking-bird of our Southern wilds, in America," he said. "What an original accomplishment! I can't imagine how you came to acquire it."

"Oh, the birds taught me. We used to be near neighbors, once upon a time. I understand them intimately."

"Do they understand you, I wonder?"

She arose quickly—not in consequence of his involuntary query, but, as he now perceived, because somebody was passing their nook. It was a solitary person, evidently, as his footfalls were almost inaudible, and the only visible indication of his passing was the glowing spark of a cigar-end. Yet the girl seemed to see clearly enough, or else it was intuition.

"It is M. Chevandier, the younger—the old Count's son," she whispered. "He has just arrived from Nice. We must go in."

Travers was formally presented to M. Chevandier, *fils*—the father of the two boys under Nerina's care. This virtually ended the visit, as it was plain that there would be no more tête-à-tête with the signorina that evening. She gave him, as he fancied, a significant pressure of the hand at parting.

He returned to his hotel to write to D'Aren, and could not but wonder at the unwonted restraint he felt in reporting to his friend the incidents and impressions of the evening. Early the next morning he took train for Genoa.

"Angel, or siren?" was the query that kept reiterating itself in his mind. "Who knows? and who cares? Not I, forsooth. Whatever the burden of her song, my ears are sealed to it—not, indeed, as Ulysses' were, but with the ringing in them of the magic name—Italy! Italy!"

The olives shimmered in silver and gray shade. Here and there a sentinel cypress rose like a velvet plume. The breeze bore a strange thymy odor, and the sound of running waters was joyous, like singing. San Miniato, the Viale dei Colli, Fiesole, Vallombrosa, all that cluster of idyllic mountains which environ Florence and outline the Val d'Arno, lay lilac in light and purple in shadow, so softened, so transfigured in the gold-suffused atmosphere of the late afternoon that the pale-faced villas on their terraced slopes were more like phantasmal bits of cloud than realities of common day.

The point of view was the Bellosguardo, whither, in company with Professor Fiske, Travers had climbed to visit a renowned old Tuscan convent-fortress, the Certosa d'Enza. Professor Fiske had been the most popular member of the faculty at Cornell University, in the young man's student days. With

the tastes and habits of a scholar, he enjoyed the independence of wealth, so that of late years he had turned Florentine, to the delight of the cosmopolitan colony in winter, no less than of certain stray Americans in summer.

The two had paused by the gray ruined wall of Monte-Ajuto, that ancient stronghold of the Templars, when suddenly the Professor made a gesture enjoining silence, and whispered:

"I'll wager there's Bebbo. The cunning rascal! Yes, it is he, sure enough."

"Who? what? where?" asked the startled Travers.

"Bebbo, the bird-catcher. See—yonder, in the grass, by the big cypress-tree."

Travers looked in the direction indicated, but at first could perceive nothing animate save the innumerable little bright-eyed lizards that darted about or peered curiously out from the luxuriant herbage. Then he suddenly became aware of the figure of a man, crouching, or rather lying at full length, amongst some weed-grown fragments of carved stone, a few rods distant.

"He is well worth your attention," continued the Professor, "for he is a character unique in Florence, and, so far as I know in all Italy. He is a bird-charmer, is Bebbo—a veritable *uccelliere* of the Middle Ages—a *birdsman*, of a race practically extinct for centuries' past, who lives solely by birds, *with* and *for* birds. Thanks to his diabolical snares and nets, his silent spring gun, his trained wolfish dog of the Maremma, his imitative whistles and calls, and I don't know how many other marvellously ingenious contrivances of his own, this fellow has wrought more devastation among the game and singing birds of the country hereabouts than any hundred ordinary fowlers."

Travers' curiosity was piqued, and he imitated his friend's caution as they approached the spot where Bebbo lay.

Bebbo was not asleep; on the contrary, he was intensely awake, though motionless as a graven image.

"Good-day to your lordships," he said courteously, but without raising his eyes or relaxing the fine cord which, wound thrice about his hand, passed along the mossy turf and out of sight in the distance. Nor did he drop the spray of aromatic flowers held between his teeth, and upon which he gently ruminated, as another might have done with a cigar or pipe. In place of a hat, the cowl-like hood of a *lucco*—the classic Florentine head-dress—covered his iron-gray curls and mysteriously shadowed his face.



And what an extraordinary face was that! Travers was at a loss to define the singular impression the sight of it made upon him, until the Professor said, later:

"You see in Bebbo a direct descendant of the falconers of the House of Este."

Again there flashed across the young American's mind the thought of that occult, avater-like transmission of physical no less than psychical traits across the abyss of centuries, which he had more than once fancied he discovered in these old lands of romance and mythology. This inscrutable birdsman, with his slight, lithe frame and keen features, his hook-nose like the beak of a vulture, and the fascinating fixity of his large, round, *yellow* eyes—was he not the living embodiment of the Greek faun, or satyr? Doubtless his hood concealed a pair of pointed ears!

When Bebbo replied to the badinage which the Professor, with the freedom of long acquaintance, presently directed against him, it was with a keen, Attic wit, coupled with an almost insolent imperturbability; while his language, far from being flavored with the local patois, seemed actually archaic in its purity. It was, the Professor declared, like his signature, which, scrawled in great Gothic characters with an eagle's quill, resembled the sign-manual of a grand seigneur of the fifteenth century.

"And how is it with the birds to-day, Master Bebbo?"

"*Dio mio!* the birds? There are no more in Italy, Signor Professore. Ah! it goes very badly."

"No more birds, eh? Well, and who is to blame for that, if not yourself? But of course you are lying, as usual. Let us see what you have caught."

"Oh, nothing at all, *signore*—nothing worth speaking about."

"Show us, at all events," insisted the Professor.

"*Gesù m'aiuta!* wait a moment. Keep quiet, gentlemen—don't stir. Look! the net, yonder. *Via!*"

Bebbo gave a sharp pull at the cord he was holding, and, lo! a hundred yards distant, a net which the two strangers had not hitherto perceived closed upon the ground like magic, enmeshing a whole flock of downy, fluttering creatures.

"That makes eleven more," he said, looking up with his malevolent smile.

There were, in fact, just eleven birds—mostly linnets and goldfinches—in the net; and Bebbo removed them with the utmost adroitness, transferring them one at a time, without ruffling a feather, to the compartments of a pair of large cages

which he kept covered with a russet basket. Here were scores of other winged captives of various species, including finches, fauvettes, redbreasts, larks, and some less familiar birds, known only to their captor.

"The pity of it!" exclaimed Travers; and his companion repeated the remark in Italian.

"Oh, it is not at my hands they suffer," retorted Bebbo. "I don't blind them."

"Blind them? Is it possible such barbarous cruelty can be practiced upon these poor little creatures?"

"*Dio mio!* such is the custom—and custom, you know, goes a long way in this country. Yes, the best singers, such as the nightingales, are often deprived of their sight, as otherwise it would be difficult to make them sing in captivity. In fact, the grand seigneurs of former times used to cause them to be *stimulated*, by having musical instruments played in their hearing. You remember, Signore Professore, the engravings of Tempesta and of Villamena, in my rare edition of Pietro Olina's 'Uccelliera,'—Roma, 1622? The prick of a red-hot needle, or a drop of boiling oil in the bird's eye, and it's all over: thenceforth your nightingale can sing to his heart's content, night or day, always fancying himself in the deepest shadows of the forest. *Ecco!* You have heard the Pope's choir in the Sistine chapel, eh? But, as for me, I am content merely to catch the birds and teach them pretty airs. And then, after all, I must live, *poverino Bebbo!*"

"*Poverino Bebbo*, indeed! Why, you scoundrel, how about the two houses they say you own and let? and your vineyard down the Arno, yonder?"

For all answer, the falconer of Este turned to his bird-cages and began to whistle ironically, imitating successively the singing blackbird, the thrush, the red and the gray partridge, the skylark, the cuckoo, the aziola owl, the nightingale, and finally the *caponero*—all with amazing ease and fidelity.

Travers recalled the "lesson" of Nerina at San Remo, and asked his friend:

"Is this sort of thing a common acquirement in Italy?"

"Hardly," was the Professor's reply. "In fact, it is safe to say that in his mastery of this, as of the other branches of his profession, Bebbo is unique."

"But I have already heard another such performance of bird imitation, and in my judgment it was not less perfect than this of Bebbo's."

"Then it must have been by a pupil of his; for in the domain of bird-lore there can be but one, the original and inimitable Bebbo. You shall decide for yourself, if I can draw him out a bit."

By force of judicious compliments and leading questions, Professor Fiske succeeded in breaking through the professional reserve of the Florentine, who explained the construction and operation of some of his most effective nets, designated (untranslatable) *al frascato, all' aivolo, allo stramazzo, del tender con le pantiere, con la ragna, alla lanciatoia*, the trapping of birds with the aid of a decoy, etc. He said, moreover, that the trouble of catching the birds was as nothing compared with the subsequent care and rearing of them—the putting in cage, watching their moultings and maladies, "stimulating" them to sing, preparing their *pasti*, and a hundred other attentions demanding science and skill.

At the same time, Bebbo was plainly becoming restive under the questionings of his visitors, and cast frequent glances in the direction of the *ascato*, or net, which he had promptly reset. The hour, too, was growing late.

"Come, Bebbo," the Professor said, as a parting word, "if money is an object to you, you know I am ready at any time to buy your old books, coins, plate, and bric-à-brac. I have already made you a standing offer of 300 lire for the 'Uccelliere.'"

"Ah, if I but dared, Signor Professore! But, no! è *vetito!* it is forbidden—impossible—è *vetito!*"

"To the devil with you, then!"

"He would be afraid to take me, the *priore* of San Jussole says, because I'm so malign and ugly."

The Professor and Travers turned their faces cityward, and as they descended the winding route, the former resumed:

"I always endeavor to hold converse with Bebbo in something like his own fashion—it is the only way to get on with him. And yet, although we are acquainted now for several years, I have never been able to make any further progress with him than what you have just witnessed. Perhaps, as you say, he is a belated faun—a sort of surviving devotee of Pan. Certain it is that he passes his time, for the most part, as we have just seen him—roving from hill to hill, from *boschetto* to *boschetto*, from the Arno valley to the top of the Apennines. And he appears to possess a physical constitution quite distinct from

that of common humanity, rendering him superbly indifferent to changing skies and seasons, to midnight moons and moistening dews, to all the innumerable hazards of his calling.

"Yet all this represents only one side of his complex character. Dreamer, skeptic, and voluptuary that he is at heart, he has accumulated a fund of cynical-philosophic reflections which furnish him with sharp and ever-ready repartee. You remember his observation to-day, when I taxed him with cruelty: 'Cruel? barbarous?' he repeated. 'No more so than the gardener who cuts his roses, the farmer who reaps his grain—or the king who mows down men!' His erudition is such that he can quote you epicurean verses from Ovid and Horace, or cite approbatory texts from the Uccelliera of Pope Gregory XV.—'Given at Rome, at Santa Maria Maggiore, under the seal of the fisher—*sub annulo piscatoris*—the eighth day of November, 1521, of our Pontificate, anno I.'

"What with his field-craft and bird-lore, his knowledge of nature and men, and his independent habits, Bebbo has lived well and joyously, not to say voluptuously. If certain old women's gossip hereabout be true, our bird-charmer has been a wild gallant in his day. In fact, the romance of Bebbo's daughter comes down to my own time here in Florence—and a sinister enough romance it was, too."

"Bebbo's daughter! He has a daughter, then?" questioned Travers, who had listened with growing eagerness to the Professor's narrative.

"He *had* until about three years ago. That is to say, there was a superb, spirited young creature whom Bebbo had mysteriously brought to Florence as an infant. She was generally known as his daughter. He occupied himself with her education—it was his only extravagance. The crafty birdsman saw in the girl a rare decoy; and she would have been sold—that is to say, married—to a rich old Sybarite, the Prince D——, immediately upon leaving her convent, had she not suddenly taken flight. She was a match for Bebbo himself in wit and finesse, and she found a protector—some say a lover—in a distinguished family of *forestieri* who was ministering here. Since then, not a word, not a trace of her. But Bebbo's vengeful hatred, none can doubt, will last as long as he does."

"What would he do, if he were to find her?"

"He would kill her—perhaps do away with her by means of one of those subtle and deadly poisons he knows so well how to

distill. 'She would have no more chance for her life than a bird in his snare.'

The Professor said this with such an air of settled conviction, and it formed so startling a climax to the preceding revelations, that Travers excitedly confided to him the story of Lucien D'Aren's love affair, and his own encounter with Nerina at San Remo.

"Now, what ought I to do, under the circumstances?" he asked, in conclusion. "If I should go and tell D'Aren?"

The elder man looked into his eyes a moment before replying:

"My dear boy, M. D'Aren is your friend, and you are mine. I couldn't think of interposing an offhand opinion, in a case like this. Reflect over the matter by yourself until the next time we meet, and then tell me if you really want it."

Two days later, Travers, on the eve of departure from Florence, sought out his friend and thanked him cordially for the advice he had *not* given.

"It is clear enough to me now," he said. "The fact that I have stumbled upon a combination of circumstances, is no reason why I should assume the rôle of an accomplice of destiny; and I shall never mention the falconer of Este. Yet, surely, Professor, this dilemma is a peculiar one for a loyal friend to be placed in. I never heard of anyone else adopting precisely this course."

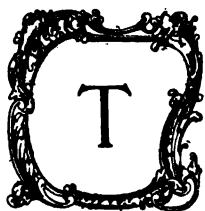
"Naturally. You hear of it only when they do the reverse. Leaving heaven out of the count, there are more things in this world, Horatio, than ever were dreamt of in your social philosophy. Adieu! You will find compensation for your forbearance, it may be, in watching your mystery work itself out."



## THE BALL CARTRIDGE \*

BY HEADON HILL

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THE Napier parade ground at Karachi lay deserted under the glowing rays of the morning sun ; but a *crescendo* blare of tumultuous music, which came from behind the echeloned barrack blocks, multiplied into something very like discord by the echoes from the great buildings, gave notice of speedy occupation. As the band rounded the farthest block, the echoes ceased, and the full melody of "The Campbells Are Comin'" rang out clear and crisp, while Her Majesty's One Hundred and Tenth Regiment of the Line—better known as "The Queen's Own Hamilton Highlanders"—defiled in fours on to the parade ground 800 strong. The battalion was returning from practicing a new skirmishing drill with blank cartridge on the sandy scrub at the rear of the barracks. When the last files were well clear of the barracks, the colonel turned his horse aside from the head of the regiment ; quarter column was smartly formed on the leading company, and the word was given to halt and stand at ease. At a sign from the chief, the officers fell out and grouped themselves round him ; the men were called to attention, and the parade was dismissed. In a moment the orderly formation was dissolved into a swarming mass of hungry soldiers hurrying to the respective barrack rooms intent on breakfast.

But the colonel still sat motionless on his horse in the centre of the parade ground, surrounded by his officers. This was the time at which, if anything had gone wrong with the drill, he would improve the occasion and administer a soldierly lecture to the delinquent ; but to-day all the latest joined subalterns had clear consciences—the drill had been performed without a blunder, and there seemed to be no reason why the customary "Good-morning, gentlemen," should not be spoken at once. There was no cloud on the colonel's hard-featured but kindly face ; he appeared only thoughtful, and as though he were wait-

\* A selection from "Chambers's Journal."

ing. As a matter of fact, that is just what he was doing. As soon as the last laggard of the rank and file had passed beyond the possibility of hearing, he looked down on the upturned faces round him and said very quietly: "Gentlemen, I know you will be sorry to hear what I have to tell you. Twice this morning, in the course of the practice, I was shot at with ball cartridge."

Discipline prevailed, and no one spoke; but the little group unconsciously pressed nearer, and the combination of suppressed emotion yielded a sound like a long-drawn sigh. The colonel, keenly in touch with those confronting him, evidently felt, and was moved by, the angry horror his announcement had called forth; he stooped down and patted his charger's neck before proceeding: "It is not the first time. On Tuesday I thought I heard a bullet pass close to me; but not being positively certain, I decided, for the credit of the regiment, to say nothing. Today there was no room for doubt. One ball just cleared my left shoulder, within a couple of inches of my ear; the other, as you see, made its mark. Both shots were fired in quick succession when I was on the rough ground at the rear of the hospital." He held up his bridle arm, and plainly visible to every one was a bullet hole through the sleeve cuff.

The sight was too much for the senior major—comrade and trusty friend of the colonel's since they fought side by side as boy ensigns at Alma. Throwing parade-ground etiquette to the winds, he blurted out: "Good heavens, Macleod, you're not hit, are you?" while an excited murmur of surmise and suggestion began to be audible among the others.

The colonel held up his hand again—for silence this time. "I did not detain you, gentlemen," he said, "to discuss the matter here, but merely to inform you of what has happened, so that company officers may endeavor to put their finger on the man who fired at me. At the same time, you are to take it as a positive order not to let a suspicion of this leak out. Tell no one but the color-sergeants, and impress it on them that they are only taken into confidence in order to assist your inquiries. If I find that so much as a rumor gets about among the men or outside, I'll break every color-sergeant in the regiment. For the honor of the corps we must discover the delinquent without any fuss, and, that being so, directly you have a clue you will report to me before making an arrest. In the meanwhile, this is not to be referred to at mess or anywhere in public. I think that is all,

gentlemen; I thank you for your sympathy, and bid you good-morning."

Col. Macleod turned his horse toward the officers' line, and rode off slowly, accompanied by the two majors and the adjutant. The unmounted officers strolled after in twos and threes in the same direction, and it was a relief to them to hear the chief, now that the stiffness of "duty" etiquette was relaxed, explaining to his companions that he was quite unhurt. For Col. Macleod was adored by officers and men alike. Stern and unbending enough on duty and in the field, in private he was the guide, counselor, and friend of every one. To all ranks the colonel's person and the honor of the Hamilton Highlanders were the two most sacred things on earth.

And now both these cherished possessions had been threatened with startling suddenness by the foul deed of the morning. Small wonder was it that those to whose astonished ears the secret had been intrusted should be agitated and anxious as they sought their quarters. The chief point in the minds of all was the utter absence of motive; for "crime," in the military sense, was almost non-existent in the happy and contented ranks of the regiment, and punishment, with its consequent heart-burnings, was therefore a rarity. The colonel had not even had occasion to confine a man to barracks for nearly a year.

"It is the act of a madman; one of the men must have gone suddenly mad," said Stuart Dalzell, the only subaltern of G company present with the battalion, as he paced by the side of Alec Frazer, his captain.

"That is the only explanation I can see which would not involve disgrace," replied the other thoughtfully.

"Is there not the alternative of accident?" asked Dalzell. "It is not unknown in other regiments for ball cartridges to get mixed with the blank ammunition."

"That must be left out of the question in this case," said Frazer. "The fact of the colonel having been narrowly missed on Tuesday, and again twice to-day, bars such a supposition. If there had been any mistake in the ammunition, the odds are a hundred to one that some one else besides the chief would have heard, or felt, the bullets. There is some influence at work more dangerous than error, I fear; and if I am right in my judgment, it concerns you and me rather more closely than the other fellows. Here we are at my bungalow. Come in, Dalzell, and I will tell you what I mean."



Capt. Frazer led the way on to the veranda, where several Bombay chairs were set out ready for guests, after the hospitable fashion of the East. Motioning his companion to be seated, before joining him he called his Hindu servant and told him to run over to the barracks and tell Sergt. Ferguson to come to the bungalow as soon as he had finished breakfast. Then he sat down by his friend and subaltern, and put into words a suspicion which was already half-formed in the minds of both.

"I see by your face that you have guessed the drift of my hint, Dalzell," he began. "The scoundrel or lunatic who is at the bottom of this outrage belongs to G Company as sure as you and I sit here. On us two and on Ferguson—for he must help us—lies the onus of saving dear old Macleod from the danger that threatens him. The worst of it is that our success in that direction, which we must move heaven and earth to attain, will most likely mean everlasting ignominy to the regiment, and our own company in particular."

"You arrive at this conclusion from the position of G Company at the time the shots were fired—that is to say, when the colonel was among the boulders at the back of the hospital?" said Dalzell.

"Quite so," replied Frazer. "As you doubtless remember, our company was at right angles to the boulders some 500 yards away, and was firing hard during the few minutes the colonel pulled up there. It is true other companies in our half-battalion were firing also; but they were extended much farther out on the plain, and a shot from them would not have pierced Macleod's cuff laterally in a neat hole like that. Had the ball come from either extremity of the line the sleeve would have been ripped lengthwise."

The lieutenant made no reply for a few moments. He sat abstractedly staring at the sandy plain, and then he said: "All that you suggest is terribly true, Frazer, and yet, somehow, it seems incomprehensible. All the men in our company are such good fellows; even the last batch of recruits is as nice a lot of lads as ever joined us. Before parade this morning, I would have trusted my life to any one of them, and I am not at all sure that I would not do so still. Is it not just on the cards that there may be some native devilry at the bottom of this?"

"That is a little too far-fetched, I am afraid," returned Frazer. "The country all round is as flat as a billiard-table, and we used

every available inch of cover ourselves. A murderously inclined native, even did such a one exist, could not have passed unnoticed. But here comes Ferguson; let us hear whether he can help us."

The color-sergeant of G Company was a splendid specimen of the Highland soldier—a great, black-bearded man, from whose six feet two of stately growth the drills of twenty years had failed to knock quite all the loose-limbed lissomeness of his mountaineering youth. There were many veterans in the corps who had fought in Afghanistan and in Egypt; but for personal prowess in the field, the record of this stern-visaged warrior outdistanced those of all his comrades. Was it not written in the chronicles of the regiment that his strong right arm had saved the colors at Maiwand? and was not the ribbon of the V. C. on his breast in token that he had snatched Colonel Macleod, sorely wounded, from among the Arab spears at El Teb? Frazer and Dalzell, watching him step on to the veranda and stiffening visibly as he approached his officers, could not help thinking that but for the colonel's injunction, if Ferguson ever had the handling of him, it would go hard with the miscreant who had tried to undo that brave rescue.

The color-sergeant halted with a salute in front of the Bombay chairs, and stood waiting. Captain Frazer knew his man too well to beat about the bush and try to break the news to him gently. The soldierly qualities of the veteran required soldierly treatment, and his officer was aware that whether he got it first or last the shock would be the same, and its effect equally well concealed.

"Ferguson," said Frazer, "the colonel was shot at this morning on parade—with ball cartridge, you understand—and from the position he occupied at the time, I am inclined to think the bullets came from G Company. Can you suggest any clue which may help to trace the scoundrel or madman who fired them?"

The angry glare in the sergeant's eyes and a quiver of the nostrils were the only sign he gave, except that there was a scarce perceptible tremor in his voice as he made answer: "It must have been an accident, sir; there's nae lad in G Company—ay, nor in a' the regiment—would willingly put his hand to sic a dastardly deed."

Frazer hastened to inform Ferguson of the previous attempt on the preceding Tuesday, which had put the idea of accident beyond the bounds of reasonable conjecture.

"It's nae matter," said the color-sergeant. "Sic an accident as that wad be waur than a crime. I'm glad to ken that it is neither, by your honor's showing. Some puir body among the lads has been stricken daft, and done this thing; but I canna say who—before to-morrow night."

Both the officers started in surprise. "You suspect some one, then?" exclaimed Dalzell. "You have noticed a strangeness in the manner of one of the men, and wish to verify your suspicions?"

"In that case, sergeant," added Frazer, "it is your duty to confide your suspicions to us. This is a serious affair, in which we have the Colonel's positive orders not to act definitely without informing him. It is my belief that if he can see his way to preventing a repetition of the attempt, he will move heaven and earth to hush the whole thing up."

"I wadna tak' upon mysel' to act in the matter except under orders, sir," replied the color-sergeant, "the mair especially as I hae nae mair suspicion than a bairn. It is just that suspicion I'm after getting, and by your honor's leave, I'll get it to-morrow night."

"How do you mean to go to work?" asked the captain.

"I ken nae guid it will do tellin' ye, sir. Seein' that I'll e'en tak me risk o't mysel', ye maun let me hae my ain way, and no speak ae word," replied Ferguson.

Now, the color-sergeant was a privileged old soldier, and might on ordinary occasions have presumed a good deal more than he was in the habit of doing; but under the circumstances, his answer was a little more than the captain of his company could stand.

"Nonsense, Ferguson," said the latter, sharply. "You will either inform me at once what steps you mean to take, or take no steps at all. That is an order, mind; and please remember that the colonel's life may depend upon your decision. There will be another blank-firing parade day after to-morrow, and he is not the man to absent himself because of what happened to-day."

The color-sergeant was still standing at attention, and his fingers clawed convulsively at the seams of his trews as he listened to the alternatives thus plainly placed before him; but he chose the one Frazer had expected, prefacing his explanation with: "Ye may ca' me a fule, sir; but I ken better than that." And then he told how he had scraped acquaintance with one

Rajab Ali, a native of Surat, who had recently established himself in the Sudder Bazaar, ostensibly as an astrologer, but who, to justify the sergeant's evident belief in him, must have been a past-master of the black art as well. According to Ferguson, Rajab Ali had the means, either by the cards or by the divining-rod, of unveiling what was hidden in the past, the present, or the future. He, the sergeant, had been privileged to test the astrologer's marvellous powers, and he had little doubt but that the latter would be able to cope with the mystery which was puzzling them. He was to meet Rajab by appointment at the rear of the barracks on the following night, when he was to be favored with a further demonstration, and he would take the opportunity of getting this matter cleared up once for all.

Frazer smiled incredulously, and then his face was clouded with a shade of disappointment. He had been pinning his faith to the practical assistance of his shrewd old subordinate, and now the latter had nothing to offer but a rather out-of-date sample of Highland superstition. What was worse, the captain was half inclined to think that Rajab Ali and his divining-rod were only being exploited as a substitute for more sensible methods of detection, because Ferguson obstinately refused to believe in the possible guilt of any member of his company.

"Come, Ferguson," said Frazer; "this is no time for tomfoolery of that kind. Besides, you forget the colonel's orders, not to blab the affair to any one. You will best show your zeal by going back to barracks and checking the amount of ball cartridge in your charge. By comparing the result with the musketry sergeant's register of every shot fired on the ranges, it may be possible to trace the cartridges that were used. There must be at least three short somewhere. At any rate, that will be a more sensible way of going to work than questioning a native impostor, whose first task will be to bandy a garbled account of the case about the bazaars."

"I didna mean heckling the body, or confidin' onything to him, sir," replied Ferguson, ruefully. "I should only ask him to show me what I most desire to see—same as he showed me my auld mither's face in a pool of ink in his hand a while ago. Mayhap, this time I should behold the daftie who did this de'il's wark. I will make a return of receipts from magazine and ammunition in stock and bring them with the musketry registers, sir," added the sergeant quickly, noting the growing impatience on his officer's face.

"Let me have them by noon," said Frazer, shortly; and Ferguson, seeing that the interview was at an end, saluted and retired with knitted brows. The captain and lieutenant watched him striding away across the parade-ground, and it was not till he had passed far beyond hearing that Dalzell broke silence.

"I suppose you were right," he said, "to put a damper on his ardor in that direction; but do you know I have got a sort of feeling—I won't go to the length of calling it a presentiment—that perhaps this fellow Rajab might after all put us on the right scent."

Frazer stared at his subaltern in astonishment. "You don't mean to tell me, Stuart, that you believe in magic and such like?" he exclaimed.

"No," said the other, "I do not; and yet the motive—not the reason—which sets me hankering after this Surati astrologer's acquaintance is pretty nearly the same, I expect, as that which makes the sergeant so keen on consulting him. I mean that Ferguson has absolute faith in the lads of G Company, and will clutch at any straw rather than try of his own initiative to fasten suspicion on any one of them. That is precisely my case. I suggested just now that native mischief might somehow be at the bottom of the attempt on Macleod. I do not believe in Rajab Ali's magic; but I know that if he is as cunning and omniscient as the majority of the rascals of his profession, it is just on the cards that he may hold the key of the situation. The mere fact, too, of finding a native of that class on a friendly footing in the barracks, seems to me, under the circumstances, to be worthy itself of investigation."

"What do you propose, then?" asked Frazer.

"With your leave," replied Dalzell, "I should like to be with Ferguson at the interview which it is very plain our obstinate old friend means having with Rajab to-morrow night. If I can work it so as to be myself unseen by the native, so much the better, and at any rate my presence would be a guarantee that the colonel's wish for secrecy was respected."

"Have it your own way," said Frazer. "I think you will waste your time; but I cannot see any harm in the idea. And now we had better tub, and go and get some breakfast at mess."

The five great stone barrack blocks stood out gaunt and clear in the silver beams of an Indian full moon. In front, on the parade-ground side, there was bustle and life in plenty; for,

though the sun had set two hours ago, it was not yet late, and the canteen and recreation rooms were still open. But in the rear, where the sandy wilderness stretched right up to the barrack walls, all was deserted and silent, save for the cries of the jackals in the distant scrub waiting for the "lights-out" bugle to encourage them for their nightly prowls round the cook-houses. These necessary offices consisted of small, detached buildings placed behind, and some little way from the main blocks, so that the smells and the refuse should not be a danger and an annoyance to the soldiers. At this time in the evening the Portuguese cooks had long since gone to their homes in the bazaar; and in the ordinary course the cook-houses would have been locked up and left to themselves till it was time to prepare the men's breakfasts in the morning.

To-night, however, it appeared that the *bobaji khana* belonging to G Company was to be in request for a rendezvous. The gong at the quarter-guard had just struck eight, when two men came around the corner of the block and entered the cook-house. Dalzell had found the sergeant quite willing to allow him to accompany him to witness his interview with the astrologer, and even eager to adopt a course which he evidently regarded as certain to obtain another convert to the mystic art. For Ferguson placed more reliance than ever on his preceptor Rajab, seeing that the scrutiny of the ammunition and of the registers had failed to yield further information than that four ball-cartridges were missing from the company chest, but that every man had properly accounted for each round served out to him.

The color-sergeant ushered his officer into the cook-house, and pointed out how he could see and hear everything that passed by stationing himself at an unglazed window at the back.

"The chiel has eyes like search-lights, sir," he said as he prepared to go outside; "sae ye must e'n keep yoursel' in the shadow. Mayhap he would refuse to display his quality, if so be as he thocht he was o'erlookit."

"How did you first pick this chap up, Ferguson?" asked Dalzell, settling himself in his hiding-place.

The sergeant paused on the threshold, and for a moment seemed puzzled to find an answer. "It was he who picked me up, sir, I suppose—when I come to think of it," he replied at last. "I was walking in the bazaar a month back, and he came up and said in Hindustani he should be pleased to

read me the voice of the stars. They a' ken in barracks that I am partial to speerin' after spirits and sic things. Mayhap he had heard it frae some of the lads. But whisht!—here he comes."

Ferguson stepped into the open, shutting the door behind him; and Dalzell crouched by the window, to watch for the upshot of events. He had not long to wait. Half a minute later the color-sergeant came into view, conversing in Hindustani with a tall, lithe native, whose white garments and carefully arranged turban proclaimed him to be of better substance than the usual run of mendicant jugglers. As they came into line with the window, Ferguson halted, and suggested that there, under cover of the cook-house, they would be free from observation—a proposition to which Rajab, after a hasty glance round, gave his assent. The moonlight fell full on his face, and Dalzell, peering from his lair not six feet away, thought he had never seen such wonderful eyes before. There was nothing shifty or snake-like about them; they were calm and steadfast enough; but they glowed like two balls of liquid fire.

"And what does the sergeant sahib order his slave to show him to-night?" began Rajab, when they had finished their greetings. "The moon is in the ninth house, and the period is very favorable for seeing visions."

"Show me the countenance of the man I most desire to see," replied Ferguson, speaking in the vernacular with which his ten years' Indian service had familiarized him.

Taking a vial from the folds of his garment, Rajab poured the inky contents into the sergeant's outstretched palm, bidding him at the same time fix his eyes on his own. Dalzell, watching closely, noticed a strange dreamy look spread over Ferguson's face, while his eyes began to wear a dazed, scared expression.

"The beggar is hypnotizing him!" thought the lieutenant to himself. "I wonder if—— But no; it cannot be."

His train of ideas was interrupted by the voice of the astrologer addressing the sergeant in tones of low but peremptory command. "There is a colonel's parade to-morrow," began Rajab. "You will provide yourself with two rounds of ball cartridge from the company chest. In the course of the drill, you will aim at Macleod sahib's heart, taking care that you are unobserved. If the first bullet fails its mark, you will use the second. And you will dismiss from your mind all knowledge of what

you are doing and whence you received these instructions. Except that you will carry out these behests, you will be in all respects as an innocent man. You are to believe that the ball cartridges which you fire at the colonel sahib are blank, both before and after the deed. Will you do my bidding?"

Dalzell, listening horror-struck, heard Ferguson's voice make answer in far-off sounding tones: "I will do your bidding."

"Now look into your hand," said Rajab.

The color-sergeant obeyed.

"What do you behold?"

"I behold my own face."

"That will serve as well as another," proceeded the juggler, removing his gaze for the first time. "You can return to the lower world."

Slowly and heavily, Ferguson blinked his way back to sense and self-control again. When the juggler had given his victim time for recovery, he asked in his original servile tones: "And was a vision vouchsafed to the sergeant sahib?"

"No," was the reply, "at least not the one I sought. I beheld but my own face reflected in my hand. You have failed to-night, Rajab."

"Something you heard while you were looking at the fluid may have distracted you?" suggested the native.

"It couldn't have been that," replied the sergeant. "Why, I only gazed for a moment, and you did not speak the while."

"'Tis well," said Rajab. "The failure is not of man, but of the stars, and their poor servant is not responsible. Perchance on the next occasion they will be more propitious. And now, fare you well, for it is getting late, and I have other work to do." And with a deferential salaam to the sergeant, he turned and glided away toward the native city.

Ferguson waited till he had gone some way, and then joined Dalzell at the door of the cook-house. The two walked toward the barracks together. The lieutenant did not speak; he was thinking with all his might.

"A failure to-night, sir," remarked the sergeant, after waiting vainly for his superior's comment. "My ain face, too! Had he just been pokin' fun at me, he could na weel hae jok it mair reasonably."

They had reached the point where Dalzell's way would lead to the mess. "Get back to your quarters," he said, rapidly. "You must not be missed. I am sorry our errand has been



fruitless; but I did not expect much from it. Good-night"; and in his hurry to rid himself of the man he wished to spare, he almost pushed the other away. Ferguson disappeared into the barrack, wondering at his officer's haste to return to mess.

The moment he was out of sight Dalzell changed his course, and running back behind the barracks, started in pursuit of the vile wretch whose scheme he meant to frustrate. His mind was made up. He must overtake Rajab at all hazards, and compel him to come before the colonel, whose first feeling, he felt sure, would be sympathy for the innocent instrument. How to punish the criminal without letting Ferguson know how nearly he had slain his beloved chief was a nut for Macleod to crack; but Dalzell knew he would move heaven and earth to manage it, for to a man of the color-sergeant's temperament a revelation of his unconscious act would mean madness or suicide.

The young officer came up with the flitting white figure just beyond the jail, where the road begins and the desert gives way gradually to the habitations of half-caste camp-followers. The man saw that he was pursued, and quickened his pace; but Dalzell's long legs gave the quarry no chance. Two minutes after Rajab knew that he was followed, the lieutenant's grip was on his shoulder. "Come back with me, Rajab," said Dalzell, quietly; "you are wanted at the colonel's bungalow."

The Surati was panting violently; but he appeared in no way disconcerted, and tried hard to fix his captor with those fatal eyes. Dalzell, knowing his danger, kept his own averted; he thought it advisable, too, to show the revolver he had brought with him. Rajab bowed meekly and obeyed; but for half a second, unseen of the other, his hand was plunged into the bosom of his white robe.

For some distance they walked in silence, and it was not till they were nearing the cantonments that Dalzell decided to put two questions to his prisoner. "Your only chance of life is to speak the truth," he said, "for your wickedness is known. What have you against our colonel that you have done this thing?"

Rajab caught his foot in a stone and staggered as he made reply, and his voice sounded weak and thin. "The colonel sahib was president of the court-martial which sentenced my brother, Gholam Bux, of the Third Bombay Cavalry, to penal servitude," he said. "I have sworn to avenge him, and I use my gift—that is all."

"And what," pursued Dalzell, "will be the effect on the sergeant of your treatment of him? Now that he will be prevented from doing your scoundrelly work to-morrow, will he always remain under the spell, and make further attempts on other occasions?"

Rajab made no answer; and Dalzell, looking down at him, saw that he was shivering as if ague-struck. "Nearly dead with funk," thought the young officer, and repeated the question.

"The spell only refers to to-morrow," replied Rajab very slowly, "he need have no fear. Allah has willed it that the colonel sahib should live, and that I, Rajab, the son of Hyder, the juggler, should die." And even as he spoke, he fell—a heap of crumpled white linen—on the sandy road. Dalzell, stooping over him, caught a whiff of the deadly churrus—the concentrated and strongly poisonous form of Indian hemp or hashish—and knew that his prisoner had solved the difficulty he had foreseen. The question of punishment would not arise, for Rajab Ali, self-slain, had gone to his own place.

Half an hour later Dalzell related his evening's experience to Frazer, and together they sought the colonel, who at once decided that Ferguson must never know his share in the dead man's misdeeds. Col. Macleod went on the sick-list, and was absent from parade next day; while the finding of the dead body of a native in the cantonment road was matter of very little moment to any one except to the color-sergeant of G Company, who to this day deploras the untimely end of the seer, who would sooner or later, he felt sure, have shown him the "daftie who fired at the colonel."



## MY FIANCÉE\*

BY ELLA TERRÉ

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HAD been telegraphic operator at "B Station" some six or eight months, and had held communication of a purely business character only with the operator at "D," when there came a change. Death silently removed the old man who had been in charge there for so long, and a new operator was installed.

A message spun along the line one February morning in this wise: "Good-morning, B." I responded:

"Good-morning, D." Then came the information: "The old man died last night, and I have taken his place."

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Nellie Merton. What is yours?" A spirit of deviltry prompted my reply:

"Ned Clayborn."

"Thank you," was the concise response. Then a message in real earnest came along the lines, and we were obliged to attend to business.

Every day I bade my unseen acquaintance "Good-morning," and never closed up at night without a farewell message. A twinge of conscience racked me at times, and a "still, small voice" whispered its warning, but the temptation was too great, and it was not long before I was sending sly messages, containing a good deal "atween the lines," to the unseen Nellie. The replies to these messages were guarded, but hopeful, and I grew bolder. It was no end of fun.

She told me her history. She had run away from home, because her parents insisted upon marrying her to a man she *detested* (and the last word came clicking viciously from my end of the line). She would never marry him—*never*. I advised her not to, and hinted at an affection deeper and truer than any the presuming "detested fellow" could offer.

Well, the outcome of it all was that I asked the unseen Nellie to be my wife, and even described the little home that was lone-

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somely awaiting her coming. I was floundering in deep water, and could but trust to a kind providence to pull me out. My "fun" was becoming dead earnest. How I wished the wires stretching between us were telephonic, instead of telegraphic, that I could perchance hear some exclamation, or gain some token of how my message was received. But this was not to be, and I had to possess my soul in patience.

That virtue was almost exhausted, when the well-known call fell upon my ears. I flew to the instrument. It was concise, and not very complimentary: "Rather than marry that brute, I will risk it."

I was in for it now, and must perforce flounder still deeper by sending rapturous messages over the wires. I, Delia Brown, was engaged to be married to a young lady I had never seen. This was forcing the question of woman's rights."

I carried the "fun" on for over three months, and every day it grew decidedly less "funny," until I began to brood over the predicament into which I had giddily led my feet. The time was rapidly approaching when I would have to claim the bride I had won in this novel and romantic manner, and my blood ran cold at the thought of how easy it would be for her to learn of my perfidy, and from all I had seen of her temper, I felt sure she would not deal lightly with anyone who would dare to play tricks upon her.

At last I could bear it no longer, and one day, just three weeks before I was to travel to "D" and claim my bride, I boarded the train with altogether another motive. It was to "kiss and make-up," after I had begged her with tears to forgive me, etc., etc.

I found a little house, with a little sign in blue and white swinging in the breeze, similar to the little house and the little sign at "B." It was occupied at the time by a young man reading a paper. I looked at him, without speaking, and he returned the compliment in kind.

"I wish to see Miss Nellie Merton," I said, and as he did not speak, I went on to explain. "I am the operator at 'B' and have an important message which must be delivered to her at once. A moment's delay means——" I paused for a word, and he spoke for the first time.

"So you are the operator at 'B' and desire to see Miss Merton? I am sorry to disappoint you, but you see, Miss Merton is at home at the present time, while I take her place. The

fact is she is going to be married, and is preparing for the great event. She cannot be seen personally, but if you will intrust the message to me, I will deliver it immediately, if you will be kind enough to take my place while I run around to her house."

His coolness nearly distracted me.

"I *must* see her!" I exclaimed, excitedly.

"But you cannot," he said, coolly. "I have strict orders not to let anyone know her whereabouts for a day or two, until these extensive preparations are well under way."

I was on the verge of tears, and with a choke in my voice I cried out, sinking into a chair, and holding up my hands, deprecatingly:

"Don't say another word! You will set me wild. If you will not tell me where to find Nellie," I went on, in desperation, "will you please tell her this? I have been a bad, wicked girl, and—and—and—there is no such person as Ned Clayborn. It started in fun, and—and—and—Please let me go to her. She will understand me so much better than you can explain it."

"*No such person* as Ned Clayborn! My dear young lady, I must beg leave to differ with you. That is the name of the young man who in three short weeks is to marry Miss Merton. Surely he is not dead?" he added, in consternation.

"Oh, will you not understand? It was all a joke at first. I thought it would be great fun, and so I, well, I am Ned Clayborn, and after a time we became engaged—all in *fun*, too," here I laughed hysterically; "I tried to stop, but I was so wicked I could not, and now poor Nellie will break her heart, and—and—and——" and I broke down and began to cry in a miserable way.

Unlike most men, my companion was not in the least disconcerted at sight of my tears, but simply laughed, loud and long.

Presently the laughter ceased; then I heard uneasy movements in the chair occupied by my companion; then he got up and paced about restlessly. Pretty soon a light touch fell upon my arm, and his voice, very gentle and kind, said: "Nellie is here to receive your confession and forgiveness." I dried my eyes and looked up, but saw no one but the tall young man, who was looking at me very earnestly.

"Where is she?" I asked, ready to cry again.

"Here," he said, holding out his hand. Instinctively I put mine into it, and it closed over it firmly.

"I also have a confession to make," he said, earnestly. "I

thought you were another young fellow like myself, and wishing to relieve the tedium of these long, monotonous days, struck up a flirtation. I intended some day to meet the young man and have it out with him, when you came with your strange confession. In short," he ended abruptly, "*I am Nellie Merton. And you are Ned Clayborn? Come, dry your eyes, Ned; your Nellie is not heartbroken at the turn about of affairs.*"

After staring at him in silent amazement for the space of five seconds, the truth of the whole matter began to dawn upon my confused brain. My face grew hot with indignation. I snatched my hand from his and sprang to my feet.

"You are a contemptible fellow!" I cried. He did not reply, but stood looking down at me from his superior height.

"It was a hundred times meaner in you, because your object was a *woman*. I will never forgive you, if I live to be a thousand."

"Isn't that rather paradoxical, considering the fact that you *thought I was a woman, and you were enacting the rôle of the sterner sex?*" he asked.

"You might have known," I answered, severely.

"But I did not," he replied.

"Here is my train," I said, shortly.

"Good-by," he replied, assisting me on to the train, despite my independence, and lifting his hat as it pulled out.

I travelled back to "B" a sadder but a wiser woman.

"You are a fool," said I to my reflection in the little mirror as I removed my hat.

A year rolled by. I had entirely recovered from my chagrin, and buried in the darkest chamber of my memory was every thought of the tall young operator at "D Station."

One morning I was arranging and copying some night-messages, when a long shadow fell across my papers. A glance upward told who it was. The door of that secret and darkened chamber of my memory flew open, and I knew that the tall young man at "D Station" was not as yet quite consigned to oblivion. Standing with hat in hand, and without any preface of any kind, he said:

"Over a year ago, you asked me to marry you, and I consented. I have come to-day to ask, Will you come? Or shall I enter suit for breach of promise?"

What could I do? And, after all, perhaps he would not have made me a better husband had I met him in the old, conventional way and waited for him to propose to *me*.

## A SECOND MEZZOFANTI\*

BY FRANCIS S. SALTUS

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FOR over thirty years, I, Professor Amos Winthorn, have directed and superintended Bridgely College to the best of my ability. More properly speaking, perhaps, my prosperous institution should be designated as Bridgely School, for I regret to say that I possess no authority whatsoever to apply to my house of learning the pompous affix by which it is generally known. My boys, however, are prepared for college, and I can affirm with a just pride that many of the most brilliant and prominent men of England have been graduated from my school before passing Cambridge or Oxford with honors due in some respect to my untiring efforts in their behalf. The number of my pupils at no period was less than thirty, and in busy years fifty and more. I took personal charge of the higher classes, and was assisted in the discharge of my duties by two experienced teachers, also by Miss Atherstone, my niece, who directed the primary department with a discerning tact that I cannot too highly praise. The pupils under her care varied in age from five to ten years, and occasionally I examined them myself, and when I noticed that some individual child was particularly bright, and gave promise of future excellence, I invariably would make him an object of special study, and then, after a short time, if I discovered that his intellect was of a stronger calibre than that of his little comrades, I would place him in a higher class even before the close of the school term. French and German were taught my boys by Professor Dupré, while Professor Henderson, a celebrated Hellenist, gave instruction in the classics. The higher English branches, mathematics, elocution, etc., fell to my charge, as well as the class in botany, while Spanish and Italian were also taught by competent instructors.

Bridgely Hall was in reality more of a pleasant home than a school, because, while attending to the mental welfare of my

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pupils, I likewise heeded their many juvenile desires with parental affection. All of us lived quite *en famille*, and my reputation for leniency seemed to check all ideas of license and mischievousness among them, for a more properly behaved set of youngsters I have rarely seen. I endeavored to be just and kind, rarely scolded, and, in fact, had little reason to do so, for my pupils loved and respected me, appreciated my tender feelings toward them, and recompensed me with zealous endeavors to improve.

One pleasant afternoon in April, as I was enjoying a favorite meerschaum in my study, the servant handed me a card, saying that a gentleman and his little boy were waiting to see me in the parlor. I glanced at the card, on which was engraved in heavy Gothic characters: "James Sanderson, Barrister, London."

"A new pupil, perchance," I murmured.

"Oh, he's a wee darling, sir," said the servant. "He has butter-colored hair and doesn't speak English. I never heard the like of the way he talks. He's French, I think, sir."

"Very well, Mary, I will be down in a moment."

Inwardly congratulating myself that the renown of the school had crossed the Channel, and totally forgetting the indisputable proof of Caledonian origin in the gentleman's name, I hastily slipped off my loose gown and, attiring myself in scholastic black, slowly descended the stairway, and with an expression which I knew to be urbane in spite of studied efforts to make it appear severe, I entered the parlor.

Mr. Sanderson was standing near a table in the middle of the room, turning the leaves of an album containing photographs of my former pupils. At a glance I knew him to be a gentleman. He was fully six feet in height, with closely shaven cheeks, dull gray eyes, and an intelligent forehead. He was faultlessly dressed, but there was something in his appearance which suggested the *roué*. He looked fatigued. His son was employed playing marbles on the carpet. He was a fat, fair, rosy little fellow with a slight squint, a pleasant kind of strabismus which was by no means a deformity, and which lent variety to his chubby features. He was dressed in a blue jacket and his yellow hair had been pomatumed into a preposterous top-knot. He picked up his marbles and leered at me.

"Good afternoon, Professor," said Mr. Sanderson. "I have heard a great deal about your school—I, ahem! beg pardon—Bridgely College, and the praise bestowed upon it by my friends



has induced me to bring my son to you. I have read your prospectus; the terms and the locality suit me exactly. I am not, I admit, what the world would call a wealthy man, and I have been seeking a cheap establishment of this kind for some time."

This last remark wounded my feelings, and I could not refrain from observing: "Mr. Sanderson, the invariable price for a pupil under ten years of age at Bridgely is two hundred pounds per annum, and I cannot agree with you in regard to its inexpensiveness."

"Oh," he ejaculated, rapidly. "Beg your pardon, Professor, you misunderstand me, by Jove, you know! I didn't wish to make any allusion to—to—let me see, Dotheboys Hall and old Squeers. Lord, no! everything here is stunning." And so saying, he began toying with my album. I perceived, nevertheless, that his vulgar apology was tinged with irony; I knew it by the look in his dull eyes. There was a flavor of Ascot about him and a general Derbyness that stamped him a sporting gentleman.

"No excuses necessary, Mr. Sanderson. Has your son had any rudimentary instruction?"

"Oh, very little, but he's a precocious young devil and needs discipline. I give you *carte blanche* for an occasional flogging when he deserves it."

"But, my dear sir," I interrupted, "it is not my habit to flog my pupils. When boys are wayward I endeavor to make them feel ashamed of their bad behavior and use gentle persuasion. I prefer to win them by——"

At this moment I received a moist and fully developed spit-ball full on my cheek, and, turning with rage and mortification, I saw my new pupil in the act of making faces as only a Drury Lane clown could have done.

"No, no!" he yelled, "no cane!"

His father laughed. "Excuse Jack," he added, "he's full of fun," and then turning to the boy, he said: "You won't be flogged this time. Be a good boy, learn your lessons, and if you get to be head of your class I'll send you a guinea a month for taffy—don't cry."

I looked at Jack and saw that he had not the slightest intention of weeping: on the contrary an expression of ineffable joy pervaded his rosy countenance.

"The child," I remarked, "seems to be advanced for his age. What might that be?"

"He will be seven next July. He was born in France; his mother was a Frenchwoman and Jack speaks the language fluently; English also."

Jack then cried out in infantile glee: "I speak both admirably."

"Oh, oh," I said, patting him on the check. "So young and already vain?"

"The boy knows the alphabet and reads a bit," said the father. "I hope you'll be able to shape him into something. I am obliged for business reasons to leave England, and if anything happens, here is my Paris address, and, by the way, Mr. Winthorn, will you kindly excuse me for offering you the payment of the first year in advance? I know it is against your rules (it was not), but I take this liberty, being uncertain as to the duration of my sojourn abroad."

"Thanks, Mr. Sanderson. I will write you a receipt and assuredly do my best to develop your son's talents."

"Yes, Jack has *decided* talent for such a snip, he takes it from his mother, bright and quick, to the point."

"*Ad rem*," said Jack.

"Have you taught your son Latin?" I asked, in surprise.

"Oh, no! *Ad rem* was the name I gave to one of my favorite dogs, a pointer. So I indulged in a polyglot pun. Now I will bid you good afternoon, Mr. Winthorn. Good-by, my child," said Mr. Sanderson, and so saying he seized the boy, lifted him to his face and kissed him on both cheeks, interrupting his demonstration of affection by peals of Homeric laughter. I couldn't understand the man. The child stuck out his tongue and roared like a fiend. An hour later he was studying his lessons in the primary department.

About a week after this event my niece entered my study, saying she had something to tell me about the new-comer.

"Has he misbehaved, Miss Atherstone?"

"Oh, by no means. He is remarkably quiet and industrious, but from what you have told me I begin to think that Mr. Sanderson has underestimated his son's ability, because I have never met, in my whole experience, with such a wonderful scholar."

"Indeed, pray tell me of his powers."

"When, on Monday last, I assigned him two easy lessons in spelling and simple addition, he surprised me by mastering them and the entire multiplication table besides, in one afternoon, and

during the week he has made such progress in orthography and geography that I would like you to examine him yourself. He is head of the class, and keeps the position. You know I am not prone to exaggerate."

"Ah!" I said, smiling, "he spells difficult words, does he? What, for instance? Constantinople?"

"Indeed he does, and *phthisis, rhythm, parallelogram, scissors, syntax, conchology.*"

"Is it possible? Does he appear to know their meaning?"

"Certainly; and his explanations are very lucid. As for that, he is continually poring over the encyclopædia, and his memory is simply prodigious."

"Well, well, I will examine this sucking Webster to-morrow."

Upon repairing to the primary the following day I found that Miss Atherstone had assuredly not exaggerated. In answer to my questions Jack gave a chronological list of the French and English kings with unflinching precision. I tried him with geography, and he furnished me with the capital of every country I mentioned, occasionally adding several of the most important towns, with their population; and, furthermore, I found to my astonishment when I called Jack to the blackboard that the rule of three had no secrets for him, and in orthography he was unassailable.

Of course such a boy could not remain in this department, and I gave orders for his transfer to the third class, formed of boys from ten to fifteen, and without losing any time I wrote to his father, asking as a particular favor the authorization to take Jack under my personal charge and begin a Latin course. Mr. Sanderson replied that he felt highly honored, and requested me to direct Jack's studies in the way I deemed most judicious. Forthwith I began the interesting experiment, and Jack seemed delighted to have other opportunities offered him for advancement, and at his own solicitation he entered Mr. Henderson's Greek class, beginning the Latin rudiments with me.

Two months had barely elapsed when this prodigy stood at the head of the third class in French literature, English composition, mathematics, German and the classics. His progress in Latin was incredible; he would translate Horace and Virgil with the greatest ease, and Greek he had mastered equally well. I at first imagined that he used *ponics*, and, aided by his formidable memory, learned his lessons parrotwise, but I was soon undeceived, and began to look upon this strange child as a new

*Fic de la Mirandole*, a second "Admirable Crichton," an unexpected honor to my school. He was sent to the second class a few weeks later, and began Spanish and Italian simultaneously. His method of learning foreign words was curious. He would select from the dictionary about three hundred words and adjectives, copy them on a long slip of paper and each word numbered. He then would read them over twice attentively, and without a mistake, recite them all, giving the number likewise.

"What is 'bird' in Spanish?" would ask Señor Alzamora.

"*Pajaro*, masculine, *ave* also. Nos. 8 and 191."

The boy, in spite of his Herculean labors, enjoyed good health; he was full of fun and the incarnation of jollity. Of course he was greatly beloved by his comrades, old and young. They looked upon him as a marvel and were even respectful to him. He was perfectly conscious of his phenomenal powers, but was by no means conceited.

Further surprises, however, were in store for me. At the July commencement Jack carried off all the first prizes in all the branches. He was as strong in the composition of French and German verses as he was competent in botany, trigonometry, and languages. He would cite from over one hundred authors, but philology was his strongest point.

I wrote once more to Mr. Sanderson asking permission to keep Jack by me during the holidays, as I considered the dear boy one of my family. Mr. Sanderson called in person and was received by Jack with every demonstration of delight. His father brought him a well-filled purse and some rare Italian books he needed, and, as I saw I was *de trop*, I left them together. The interview lasted for over an hour, and from my study I could hear outbursts of laughter, Jack's squeaky treble blending with his father's sonorous, baritone guffaws.

"A happy reunion, indeed," I murmured.

When the bell rang, Mr. Sanderson reappeared and gave his consent to my proposal. Jack was to stay with me. During the summer vacation the majority of my pupils remained at Bridgely. Those who wished to pursue their studies could attend the morning and evening class, but this was not obligatory. Jack never missed one, and continued to improve in the most miraculous way.

One event occurred during the vacation worthy of notice. I have the well-established reputation of being one of the best Orientalists in England, and had made the study of Eastern lan-

guages the chosen occupation of my life. In my study I possessed a valuable collection of manuscripts, grammars, and dictionaries in Sanskrit, Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, Persian, Hindustani, Tamil, etc., and I often sent contributions to our leading reviews on matters appertaining to those languages.

One afternoon, having been suddenly called away from my labors, I left upon my study-table an article relating to a disputed passage in the Gulistan, giving what I considered to be the correct translation. On my return I found, in amazement, on the margin of the article, a totally different rendering of the question, written in Persian, and, worse than that, I was forced to admit that it was the genuine reading elucidating what had hitherto been obscure to me! Who could have written it? - No one at Bridgely College knew a word of Persian. I acknowledge that I instantly thought of my wonderful boy, but I dismissed the idea with a shrug of incredulity. However, I resolved to find the key to the mystery and continued my article, purposely filling it with the most outrageous blunders.

An hour later I found Master Jack correcting them!

"Heavens! this is sorcery! Where did you learn Persian?"

"In your library, Professor, and all the rest, too."

"What! Armenian? Turkish?"

"Yes, sir."

I instantly proceeded to examine him, and with the first real pang of envy I ever felt in my life, I was forced to admit that the boy spoke the truth. He could converse in seven Eastern languages with Satanic ease. My envious feeling was of short duration, and transformed to stammering wonder I clasped him to my arms, crying:

"My boy, my boy, you are a second Mezzofanti, the greatest living linguist."

"Oh, no, sir!" he exclaimed, disengaging himself violently. "Mezzofanti knew seventy languages; I only know fifteen."

"You will surpass him, my boy; you are the eighth wonder of the world," I cried, in rapture. "I will write to Rome, to London, to Paris; I will call a meeting of linguists and philosophers here—*here* at Bridgely College! I will make you famous, Jack, for you have given me an imperishable fame. You shall learn even more, Dutch, Icelandic! Hungarian! Swedish! Portuguese! Think, Jack! Danish! Chinese! Russian!" I saw him smile faintly when I mentioned Russian.

Deeply impressed by this extraordinary revelation, I imme-

diately proceeded to compose a circular containing all the facts and events I have mentioned in this narration, and lost no time in forwarding it to all the universities and important colleges of Europe, cordially inviting the leaders of literature and science to Bridgely for the purpose of publicly examining my prodigy.

Answers poured in from every portion of the continent; people flocked to our quiet village from every institution of celebrity, and, in a word, six weeks later Bridgely was crowded with the literary *élite* of Europe.

I will pass briefly over the colossal success of this glorious day. Suffice it to say that Jack passed through the ordeal, grandly, triumphantly, magnificently. The omniscient child, hailed with tumultuous applause after every signal victory, proved his modesty as well as his genius. His powers were tested by gray-haired professors, and with such difficulties that I was exasperated, yet the wonder-child answered them all! The most striking thesis he sustained in Latin was "De philosophica disputatione Abelardi cum Sancto Bernardo." This refutation of Luther in Greek was sublime, and his dissertation proving conclusively that spiritualism was known to the Egyptians, founding his reasons from lately discovered inscriptions on Theban obelisks, was eminently applauded; likewise his impromptu odes in eleven languages, and his essay on the Basque dialects.

At the conclusion of this solemn and imposing exposition of genius, Mr. Sanderson, who had been roaring with laughter, I grieve to say, during the whole proceedings, took Jack away for a short trip to Paris.

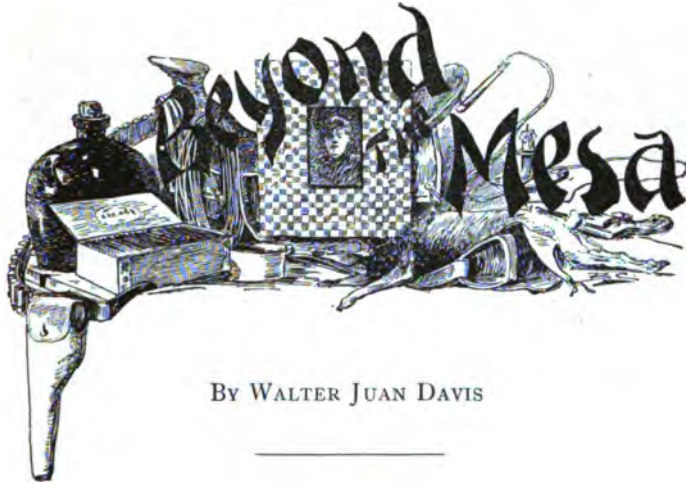
A week later I received the following letter from my old friend, Professor Clarke, who had assisted at the examination:

DEAR AMOS:—I congratulate you upon the great success of your infant prodigy! He is truly a wonderful creature! I did not wish to expose *you* to ridicule in public, otherwise I would have told you before how cruelly you have been fooled. Your marvel-child, your "second Mezzofanti," etc., is *not a child*. Professor Ivan Paschkoff (*alias* Jack Sanderson) is the most distinguished linguist in Europe. You know his name well; he is a walking encyclopædia of general knowledge, besides being Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Moscow. He is a dwarf, a native of Odessa, and is at present in his forty-eighth year. A Russian student informs me that this is not the first time that Paschkoff has played this trick. While at your school he shaved twice a day, used powder and paint artistically, and fixed his hair with all the skill of an experienced actor.

Yours sincerely,

J. CLARKE.

P. S.—Mr. Sanderson, Jack's alleged father, is the wealthy Bigby Dennyshire, the sporting Earl. He is the greatest practical joker in England, and I presume rewarded Paschkoff munificently for his trouble.



BY WALTER JUAN DAVIS

AS Lafe and Shorty rode at an easy canter up the slope toward Dunk Judd's cabin, they heard a pistol-shot. Then they saw a curl of thin, blue smoke rising from the grease-wood brush, fifty yards back of the house. Just as they reached the front of the cabin, Dunk came around the corner, dragging by its tail the dead body of a coyote.

"Yu got 'im, didn't yer?" Lafe called out.

"Yubet—hello, boys; git down!" was Dunk's response. "Yer see," he went on, "this here feller's been robbin' my meat strings. When I jerk er lot er meat an' hang 'er out, this here cuss comes erlong to whur one er ther lines sags down low, an' ketches erholt an' pulls down ther whole durn shebang an' drags 'er off an' has er picnic—but I reckon he'll be er kind o' quiet kyote f'm this on," he added, laughing gently, as he looked down at the limp body.

The sun was down, and darkness was coming fast from the East, while the sulphur yellow was fading from the high sky-line the Western mesa made.



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Dunk dropped the carcass, and came up to where his visitors sat astride their horses. They had not accepted his invitation to "git down," and evidently had no intention of doing so. They fidgeted while Dunk was talking about the coyote, and seemed in a hurry to broach another subject.

Lafe was so tall, that Nature, repenting of her freak, had bent him at both ends to make his height nearer normal. His long, lean neck ran forward from his shoulders almost at right angles with the perpendicular of his body; and when he talked, his Adam's apple moved up and down like the bubble in a steam gauge. His legs took permanent oblique angles at the knees, so that his figure was a long-shanked S.

Shorty was properly so called. He was short, and he was fat of face and rotund of form, so that he appeared to roll off his horse when dismounting and to roll on again when he made ready to ride.

He and Lafe were great cronies. They worked together on the range, slept together in their shanty on the Home Ranch, and now and then went to Tequesquite and got drunk together. They were known to the other boys as The Twins. They were not now in their regulation garb. They wore white shirts and "store pants," the legs of which were stuffed into limber boots, whose tops were elaborately stitched with red thread. Their coats were strapped to the backs of their saddles. But their hats were of the usual wide-brimmed sort, banded with leather, and the inevitable bandanna handkerchiefs were around their necks in lieu of those abominations, collars. The faces of the Twins were blazing red, and here and there upon them were sanguinary evidences that each had endured the agony inflicted by the one razor on the Home Ranch. Of course, spurs and revolvers, always indispensable to the cow-boy toilet, whether he dress for carnival or carnage, formed a conspicuous part of their accoutrement.

"Phe-e-ew!" whistled Dunk. "Whur yer goin', all dressed up so?"

"Goin' down ter ther dance ter Hank Woodses, an' we come by fer yu," said Shorty.

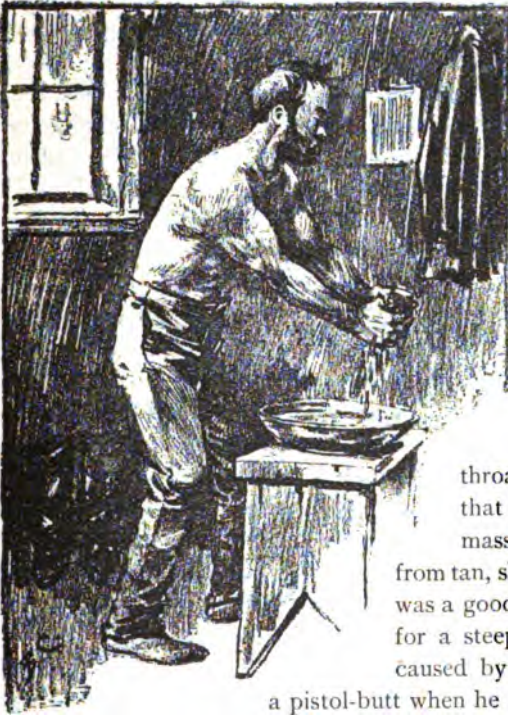
"Me? Huh! huh! What yer talkin' 'bout! Yu know I don' know no mo' 'bout dancin' 'an er mud turkle; b'sides, I done turned ther critters out. They mu' be pooty nigh over t' the mesa by this time—an' I ain't fixed up nor nuthin'——"

"Gwon an' git yer harness on," said Lafe. "We'll round up ther



ponies an' cut out one an' have 'im togged up befo' yu git one leg inter yer Sunday britches." The next instant he and Shorty clamped their horses' sides with spurred heels, and away they went, jumping recklessly into a run from the very starting point.

Dunk went inside his cabin and felt around in the interior darkness for the match-box. Having found it and lighted a candle, he hurriedly set about making ready for his appearance in public. He first rubbed his boots with a bacon rind until they were black and shiny, and then set them to one side while



he washed his hands and face and brawny neck. Baring himself for this purpose, he brought into better view his magnificent frame. He was a big, gentle fellow, with blue eyes, brown skin and bearded

throat and chin. Now that his hat was off, his massive forehead, free from tan, shone whitely. His was a good face to see. But for a steep bend in his nose, caused by the hard whack of

a pistol-butt when he fought three "rustlers" at San Lorenzo, he would have

been handsome. He was a quiet man—quiet, but never moody—and his smile was like that of a child. It was in the gleam of his usually placid eye that men saw danger sometimes. He had a fancy for living by himself and had with his own hands built the house he occupied. He worked for the owners of the Hash-Knife brand, and took his pay in yearlings. He had accumulated in this way what he called a "little bunch" of cattle, but they numbered some hundreds. Everybody liked Dunk and let him alone. Not that they did not

visit him and enjoy him, but they made no comment upon his peculiarities while in his presence. That had been tried by one of the boys soon after Dunk came up from Texas and took his place in their midst, but the result had proved most unsatisfactory to the critic.

As Dunk had no shaving to do, he did not keep the boys waiting, but was ready at the door when they led his broncho around, caparisoned for the journey.

Ten miles through the twinkling gloom of a New Mexican night rode Dunk and Lafe and Shorty, down to Hank Wood's ranch. The tough little cow ponies loped unflaggingly, neck and neck, with tossing manes. Now and then one of the riders would throw a leg around the horn of his saddle, and take rest. Always, on the right, was the dark wall of the mesa running out southward to black infinity. On the left lay the rolling plain, with its occasional conical sand-hills tufted with mesquite.

The boys pulled up only once. That was at Ojo Blanco, where the horses drank from the trough by the spring, and their riders from the bottle thoughtfully provided by Shorty.

"That ain't so durn bad, Shorty," Dunk remarked in commendation of the red-hot gulp that had brought the tears to his eyes. Dunk very seldom tasted liquor.

"They ain't none uv it bad. Some's better'n others, but it's all good; huh! huh!" replied the more seasoned Shorty, dragging out the stale frontier axiom with great relish of its everlasting quality of humor. Lafe said nothing, but smacked his lips, and it was clear that his palate was pleased.

Only monosyllables were exchanged thereafter. The whiskey must be allowed to soak. Its fumes were too precious to be breathed out and lost in the utterance of useless words.

On they bounded, the hard, gray road coming up out of the forward darkness, passing under them and losing itself in the gloom that closed in swiftly behind. Rounding the point of the mesa at last, two shafts of light sprang at the travelers from the roadside, and at the same time the tramp of feet and the seesawing monotone of a fiddle came to their ears through the open windows of a low, square house, whose outlines showed up vaguely against the sky.

"B'gosh, they gittin' at it in er hurry!" exclaimed Shorty.

"Sounds like some o' them ham-footed Ex Tee fellers, f'm ther way they're a-poundin' them planks," growled Lafe, not half pleased at being late; for, owing to the limited supply of ladies

available for dancing purposes in that sparsely populated plain, feminine favors were distributed by lot, and tardy male comers had to depend on "divvys" or "extrys" for their chances. Dunk smiled, but said nothing. He would enjoy the occasion as he did all others of the kind, sitting with the old folks and those of the younger men who had not partners, listening to their comments, smoking, and looking on.

A shout of welcome and announcement from old Hank Woods stopped the dance in the midst of an intricate figure, and brought all the dancers to the now open door to say "hello" to the Hash-Knife boys. "Roll off an' git in here 'f yer wanter shake yer feet! Ther boys an' gals hev kicked up a pow'ful lot er dust a'ready!" was the greeting that they heard. Old Hank was in good humor.

"He's got at ther pizen bottle early," chuckled Lafe, as he and his two companions led out their steeds, each to isolated anchorage in the prairie back of the house.

"Yes, ther durned ole cuss 'll be in the middle o' ther ring dancin' Dan Tucker, fust thing yer know," was Shorty's rejoinder.

A number of cow ponies neighed out challenges to the Hash-Knife horses from different parts of the darkness where they were picketed, and now and then there loomed up a four-footed captive at the end of his tether, reaching forth an inquiring nose in the direction of the equine strangers.

The house was built of boulders from the arroyo, set in a poultice of mud, which had dried to plaster. Inside, it was roughly comfortable. There were only three rooms, and the larger was now doing service as a ball-room. Strings of red peppers—or "Chile Colorow," as it was the Mexican fashion to call them—hung in bright festoons among the saddles, lariats, bridles, belts, calico dresses, sun-bonnets, canvas coats, and other useful merchandise, that half hid the irregularities of the walls. Beneath these were home-made benches, with widely straddled legs, on which sprawled and sat in various unstudied attitudes those who were not stepping about with rhythmic awkwardness over the puncheon floor to the measure set by old Jose's fiddle. Old Jose, the Mexican, pulled a mighty stroke at the catgut, and was ever ready to exchange his services for such quantity of spirits as, bestowed within him, would sustain the energy of his arm.

In the doorway of the room opening out of this salon, sat

beaming Mrs. Woods, with her gawky boy of nine leaning on her shoulder. He stared hard at the big men who sat about, and grinned sillily with pretended knowledge of each joke or



allusion, but was ready to run and hide if personally addressed. A very little, grimy-faced girl peeped up from where she squatted on the floor, using her mother's limp, unbusied arm as a vizard to be pulled down in case she should be directly looked at. An overgrown baby, a born misanthrope, rolled about in Mrs. Wood's lap, scowled at each new arrival, refused all the friendly overtures of those who wanted to know how "ther young un" was getting along, and took

his general spite out upon the mother who bore him, by wiggling about, pulling her hair, and, with chubby, merciless hands, tweaking her nose until her eyes were watery.

But the sun-browned, healthy dame treated all these tortures as mere trifles, and was as gossipy and cheerful and hospitable as old Hank himself.

"I'm mighty glad yu come down, Dunk, though I wuzn't hardly a-lookin' for yu," said she, as the Hash-Knife boys came sliding along next the wall so as not to interfere with the dancers. "Move over, Kitty; Abe, yu go an' git ther cheer f'm ther kitchin!" The urchin at her back slunk away grumbling, and soon returned with what appeared to be more of a stool than a chair. Mrs. Woods fitted it snugly into the doorway beside her.

"Yu come here an' set by me, Dunk; I don't guess yu goin' ter dance none."

"Dance? Well, I reck'n not! I'd look pooty er hoppin' eroun', wouldn' I?"

"Well, yer could dance ef yer wanted ter, but I know yer ways—be keeful how yer lean back. They ain't no back on that cheer, 'f yu'll notice. It wuz ther las' one we hed, an' er co'se Hank had ter go an' r'ar back in it tell he busted all ther props offen it." This was not querulously said: Mrs. Woods smiled blandly as she spoke. Everything that happened was "all right, s' long ez nobody's hurt," with this comfortable-minded woman.

"Whut yu sayin' erbout me, old lady?" demanded her husband, interrupting himself in his joking with the boys to joke with his runnin' mate," as he called her.

"Nuthin' ha'f bad ernuff, yu c'n be dead shore o' that;" was her jocular rejoinder.

Then old Hank winked at the public at large and railed, gleefully: "Yu better look out! I'm er keepin' cases on yu an' Dunk. They ain't er goin' ter be no 'lovements eround here 'thout I find it out!" And then he roared loudly, and all the boys roared in unison, and Mrs. Woods laughed till she quaked, and shook her fist at the jester; while Abe and his sister danced about and shouted and clapped their hands to keep pace with the general jubilation; and the enemy of mankind writhed in agony in his mother's arms and gouged his fingers into her fat neck viciously.

The dancers, all unmindful of this byplay, were having great fun on their own account, while old Jose sawed away, oblivious of everything except the soothing, drowsy effect of the monotone he was making:

Slip-slip, slip-slip, tramp-tramp, tramp.

The shuffling of the girls' feet and the heavy stamping of the men put regular periods and accent to the measure. The slurring fiddler only indicated by round turns the points where beats were pertinent.

The cow-punchers, with serious faces and staring eyes, tramped heavily through the "forward and back," and quickened their speed when it came to the "swing," merely walking around their partners who whirled on their heels. In this manœuvre it not uncommonly happened that the cow-puncher trod on his own toe.

The girls were more agile. They were nearly all raw-boned and clumsy, but they threw themselves into the work with an abandon which, if it did not beget grace, gave them momentum, and their gyrations made their skirts balloon bravely out, and

when one of these plains lassies glanced proudly downward and saw them stand out like that she was happy, for she knew the admiring masculine observer was saying to his neighbor "She's a-flyin' like er bird."

But the girls of the Ute Creek capered in somewhat subdued fashion this night, for they were embarrassed and a trifle awed by the presence of one of their own kind who was a stranger; and the cow-boys were, as far as was consistent with the formation of the figures of the dance, ignoring a smooth-faced, white-skinned chap who was a stranger too.

Mrs. Woods, in answer to Dunk's whispered "Who's them folks?" had explained with many important nods at the inquirer, and admiring glances at the pair discussed:

"W'y, that's my niece, Del Taggitt. Ain't she pooty? An' that young feller all dressed up is er drummer f'm Denver; he sells shoes an' things like that. He knowed Del up to Dodge City, Kansis, whar her folks lives. She jis got here yistiddy, an' she's er goin' ter make us quite er visitation. Ther drummer's got ter go on down ter Red River Springs ez soon ez ther buck-board comes. I reck'n he won't git ter dance no mo' after this set. Say, don't they git down ter it, though? Wait 'll yer see um waltz!"

Dunk had never in his life seen anything that impressed him as did the wavering, whirling figure at the far end of the room. He asked no more questions, but sat and stared. Shorty and Lafe, and two or three others on the bench about old Hank, were being informed by their host of the character and antecedents of these guests, and the faces of all showed unusual interest. They saw a smirking dry-goods clerk, and a tall, ungainly girl.

With a mouth so lovely that the eyes of a fish would unfilm and sparkle at it, Del Taggett was, in all other respects, a homely person. Besides being tall, she was slim and loose-jointed, and her shoulders drooped, and she let her head hang forward limply. Her coarse brown hair, which had never been long enough to be respectably knotted at the back of her head, dragged in slovenly fashion around her ears and about her collar. Her little gray eyes were close together, and went out completely when she giggled; and she giggled a great deal. A small knob of a nose, with a shine upon it that attracted attention to its insignificance, stood above the matchless mouth that smiled down and permanently checked further criticism;

for Nature had made a rosy, radiant success of this feature. The full lips, whether they opened for an inane laugh or lay together and tempted men, appeared to hold their perfect outlines and soft, elastic sweetness. Through pout and giggle their charm remained, while now and then white teeth gleamed out between them so expressively that one half believed Del saw with them, and that the inadequate eyes above had retired in their favor.

But Del's figure was much "against her," as her unfeeling father was won't to say, and her own very evident belief in the gracefulness of her form and carriage put an acute accent upon her lack of it. Yet every one of the hard-riding plainsmen who saw her that night considered her the most queenly and altogether beautiful vision that ever pirouetted in petticoats.

Del's dancing was distinctly bad, and when she and the drummer tried a waltz, in between sets, they so emphasized the measure with high jumps and an inordinate clatter of feet, that the mellow droning of old Jose's fiddle was utterly stamped out of hearing, and the twirling two were left to travel, out of time, along the line of their small orbit. But the country-folk moved back closer to the walls and into the uttermost corners to make room for them, Mrs. Woods exclaiming delightedly: "Look at um sail!" and Shorty waddling around after them, "tryin' ter git ther hang uv how they hooked on," as he afterwards explained.

When the music ceased and the set had been danced out, Del followed the smart "drummer" to the door, giggled, and flashed her teeth at him as he climbed into the waiting buckboard and joined the chorus of "Good-by! Take keer uv yerse'f!" with which he was sped out into the night.

But there seemed to be no great sorrow experienced at the loss of this vendor of shoes, and, along with their sudden increase of



bashfulness, the boys felt a keen sense of relief when they knew he had gone.

"Say, Hank, ain't yer goin' ter giv us er knock down to yer niece?" whispered Lafe, when the door had closed and the musician began to torture his instrument with fresh tunings.

"Co'se I am. Come here, Del," said the spry old man, turning on one foot and "wingin'" with the other, "come here an' lemme interduce yer." He passed his arm about her waist and thus brought himself up standing. "Gem'men, this here's my niece, Del Taggitt, an' she's er thoroughbred, an' 'f any uv yu think you c'n dance tell she hollers 'nuff, jis pitch in."

"Aw, Unc' Hank, yu know I caen't dance much, hih-hih!" the girl simperingly protested, leaning her head on her uncle's shoulder and throwing a languishing look around with her dots of eyes that immediately went into eclipse when her laugh broke out.

"Shet up! shet up! yu c'n hop all eroun' ther whole bunch an' not turn a hair!" was Hank's response. "Now grab yer gals an' git ter yer places, yu fellers. I reck'n I'll jis sling my hoofs er little myse'f. I'll show yer that ther old man's got er whole lot er good leather in 'im yit. Hol' on, Hosay!" he continued, throwing up his finger to check the fiddler, as he dragged Del to the far end of the room. "Wait 'll I git red er some er this harness." He had his coat off in two motions, and with the third he flung it to his wife. Then he leaned far forward, bowed his legs and cut a circular caper as he plunged back to his place beside his niece. "Now look out fer some er ther talles' buckin' yu ever seen—let 'er go!" he shouted; and the music squeaked out briskly, and amid general laughter at the old fellow's antics, the rhythmical stampede began.

This was a jolly whirl, for, as Shorty told a Cross-Ell man the day after, "Ole Hank turned hisse'f loose, an' things had ter pop." To say he had "turned loose" was but to recite a fact. He lustily led the revel, he shouted out odd figures and bundled laggards ahead of him, and drove them to their places with threats and thumps. As his broad back loomed up at "swing corners" or "do-ce-do" there could be seen upon it, blazoned in blue, "X X—Rose of Kansas." Mrs. Woods scanned the legend with pride and said to Dunk, "They's heap better stuff in them flour sacks 'n they is in that store domestic, an' Hank says my ho'made shirts ain't ha'f ez sweaty an' bad ez them boughten ones."



But Dunk had no eye for shirts. His attention was all in use upon other material. He was watching Del Taggett, just as he had been doing ever since he came, and his responses to Mrs. Wood's remarks were brief and vague. He sat bent forward, with his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands, and wished, for the first time in his life, he knew how to dance. His right foot was for rushing in and trying it anyhow, and seemed to fret mightily at being restricted to a subdued heel-and-toe performance beneath Dunk's chair.

The girl who so absorbed the attention of the big plainsman was fully aware of the impression she had made, and, deeming the general introduction she had received sufficient to apply to particular cases, looked often his way and smiled at him in a way that confused and delighted him so that he was incapable of anything but blushing and smiling back, and gazing as if his very life depended upon his catching every glint of her teeth and glance of her eyes.

After the set was over and old Hank and all the other men had gone into the next room to "th'ow in er slug," as they termed the taking of a drink, Mrs. Woods gave up her seat to Del, who sat down by Dunk, and the two talked together awkwardly.

"Yu dance mighty well, Miss Taggitt," said Dunk, by way of compromise with the something inside him which madly urged him to say, "Yu're ther pooties' an' sweetes' gal 'at ever chawed air."

"Oh, do yer think so, Mr. Jug? hih! hih!"

"Guess yer slipped yer sights er little on that there name er mine, but I don' know ez yer missed it so doggon fur neither—huh, huh! It's Judd—huh, huh!"

"Oh, 'xcuse me. I might er knowed 'twuzn't Jug; but it's kinder funny, me er gittin' it thaterway, ain't it! Hih, hih, hih!"

Dunk slapped his thigh, and laughed hard. "Huh—huh—should say it wuz—Jug!—huh—huh—that's er good un on me—huh—huh—huh!"

But it is probable that he would have found very little that was amusing in it had the mistake been made by another.

There was more dancing after that. Old Hank grew more and more hilarious, and the Ute Creek girls became less diffident and did not have to be pulled by the arms to their places on the floor, though they did continue to exchange whispers and

looks derogatory of the girl from Dodge City who had so suddenly become a fad among the "men folks." Del noticed the enmity she had aroused, and exulted in it. She also gave Dunk more of her society when she was not dancing, and furnished that close listener with much data with respect to the great things that happened with easy frequency "up ter Dodge."

It was nearly four in the morning when Lafe came unsteadily from the far room where he had partaken of "jes one mo', fer luck," and announced the time to the other Hash-Knife boys. "I reck'n we be better be hittin' ther trail, fellers," said he thickly, and with a sleepy drawl. Lafe had thrown in a good many slugs.

"Yes, it's time ter git er move on," Shorty consented, stretching up his arms, that looked like bolsters, and yawning unreservedly.

Dunk, seated by Del, was loath to leave his place, but he could not stand out against the proposition made and accepted by his companions. So there were good-by's and departure, and Dunk's arm tingled along its whole length when Del, for a second, left her soft hand in his big palm, that felt to her like padded leather.

The brisk air of early winter was astir under the fading starlight as the boys rode home, and it stung their faces and braced them up and drove away their drowsiness. The ponies capered as they galloped, and snorted out white, hot breaths and sucked in cold ones with their red spread nostrils. The creeping white of dawn was exaggerating into trees the bushes on distant sandhills. As the light grew, the mesa-edge became plainer to the eye, but its rugged downward slopes and ridges were still vague, and, nearer the plains, they lost all individuality and merged into a smooth, blue-black, far-reaching rampart. But soon, as day came on yet stronger and stronger, spreading up the East from horizon to zenith, the jagged outlines of the protruding cliffs of the lower walls began to reveal themselves.

And now the boys reached a point on the road where they could look around a massive corner of granite and see The Face—a frowning landmark which, becoming visible, marked a distance of seven miles from the Home Ranch. It stood out clearly, a sharp-edged bastion on a promontory of the mesa, with the shape and contour of a human countenance. From this high place it scowled forever across the plain. Its gigantic features, worn but unsoftened by Nature's tears, discolored by

the weary lapse of time, expressed extreme disgust of all that was and only sullen expectancy of what might one day come from out the East, toward which its eternal gaze was bent.

Thus far, Lafe and Shorty had ridden side by side ahead of Dunk, who had dropped behind a little. Not a word had been said since they left the Woods ranch. Now, Shorty had rolled to the ground with a jingle of spurs and a flap of his holster against his hip, and was tightening a loose girth, and Dunk overtook his companions.

"See th' Ole Man?" asked Shorty of the laggard, as he jogged up.

"Yeah, seven miles mo'. Come on, we better keep er jumpin'; it'll be sun-up fust thing yer know."

Shorty gave another heave at the back cinch, then he mounted, and the three loped on again. But the season of taciturnity was at an end. Shorty wanted to talk. "Reck'n we'll feel kinder ham-strung 'fore ther day's over, bein' up all night," said he.

"Aw, yu durned ole tub, whut yer good fur!" growled Lafe. "I'd set up ever' night this week ter git ter go ter enuther caliker round-up like we had las' night."

"Well, I ain't er beefin' much myse'f, 'cause we did have er lambastin' good time—say, how did yer like ther stray filly?"

"Like 'er! 'f I c'd rope 'er I'd sell my saddle an' go ter plowin' co'n, an' never stick ther neck uv er bottle inter my face again," said Lafe with emphasis.

"Same here, b'gosh; but I reckon they ain't nuthin' a-ridin' this here range kin git er slip-knot on her. Whut'd you think erbout 'er, Dunk?"

"D'yer mean Miss Taggitt? I thought she wuz er pooty nice little gal," he answered; but there was a frown on his usually placid face. Lafe and Shorty understood Dunk's symptoms, so they winked at each other, and changed the subject.

"Come over pooty soon, Dunk, an' we'll git up a little game!" shouted Lafe after the young recluse, when the point was reached where the trails forked, and the one which led to his habitation bore off to the left.

"All right; yu fellers come eroun' when yer kin—so long!"

"Addyose!"

The Twins gazed at Dunk's lessening figure as the divergence of the trails put more distance between them and their big friend. He was soon no more than a bounding black speck against the gray grass of the slope beyond him.

"Ack's kinder funny, don't he," said Shorty, at last.

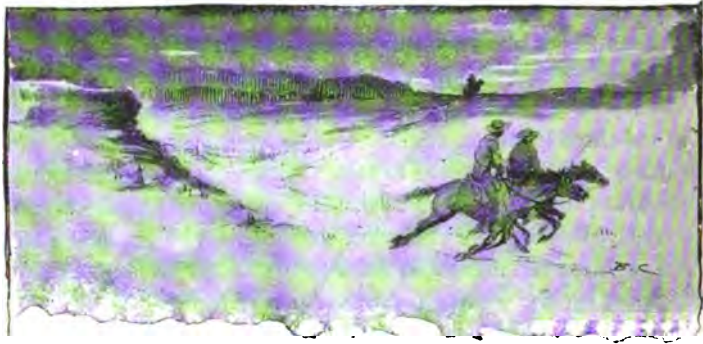
"Don't it beat all! He's clean, dead locoed erbout that little trick f'm Dodge," was Lafe's response.

Shorty looked up quickly. "D'yu reck'n he is?"

"Shore," said Lafe, laconically.

Shorty's round, porcine face appeared to elongate. "That settles it, then!" he ejaculated mournfully.

"Well, it p'intedly does, with yu, 'f that's whut yer talkin' erbout. What kinder idee 've yu had in that knot er yourn, any-



how?" Lafe's lank visage was wrinkled into a most exasperating smile. "Ther idy er yu er trimmin' yer rope fer er critter like that!" he went on. "W'y, man, yer jis well talk erbout stringin' er mount'in sheep!" Then Lafe had a laugh, a long and a loud one, that made his pony throw one ear back inquisitively, and frightened a jack rabbit from his secure place beside the way, so that he fell a victim to Shorty's quick shot and savage mortification.

As Dunk rode along he took himself to task for being "a durned ijit," but in spite of him, the regular trollop! trollop! of his horse's feet insisted on fitting itself to a dance tune, and his ears still seemed to hear "Cross over!" "Fust lady t' right!" and through the interstices of these louder sounds, the dear little "hih,—hih!" of the girl "f'm Dodge." And now the sun rose and lit the landscape, and as its radiance ran along, here tipping a clump of grease-wood, there giving a rosy outline to a hitherto unseen boulder, and, finally, at a single pulsation, sending a swash of yellow miles and miles up the slope, it was to Dunk just Del's smile, become glorified and universal, breaking out and rushing over all the world, transfiguring it.

Dunk smiled as he considered this mental vagary and knew

he was "a goner," and said so to himself with an anxious, but hardly hopeful sigh.

But a few days later he sneaked down to the Woods ranch again. He wanted to mend his branding-iron at Hank's forge. The old man knew very well that the job could have been better done at the shop at the Home Ranch, and readily discerned the true cause of Dunk's visit, but he liked the broad-shouldered, thrifty young man, and refrained from joking him. Furthermore, he invited him to stay to dinner, as Dunk had foreseen he would, and generously moved away when Del came out to the shop to see what was going on.

"Good mawnin', Mr. Judd; I got yer name right that time, hih,—hih!" said she.

"'At's whut yer did. Howdy do, Miss ——"

"Call me Del, 'thout ther Miss."

"Kin I?" said Dunk, eagerly. "All right; howdy do,—Del. But yu mus' call me Dunk, then," he added.

"All right, Dunk." She put out her hand and with it gave him that rare smile.

"B'gosh, this is wadin' in high clover," Dunk said to himself. He forgot all about his branding-iron, and was much abashed when old Hank came around an hour later to see how he "wuz a gittin' on."

But he at once took all the blame upon himself when Del commenced to say that she had taken up his time with her gossip. "I wan't in no partic'ler hurry, no how," he said, and went into the shop and did the only piece of botchwork that his skillful hands had ever turned out.

Around the dinner table there was much cheerful chatter, and some embarrassment on Dunk's part when he met Mrs. Woods's sympathetic gaze; but he was a happy man, and he responded with alacrity when the good woman said pointedly, "Yu mus'n' make no stranger uv yerse'f now, Dunk; we'll let yer know when we git ernuff uv yer."

"Yessum, I got er good deal er time on my hands now t'll ther late round-up," said he, "an' I guess I'll lope over ter see yu-all wunst in er while."

Del said "Yes, yu mus'," and then asked him if his pony bucked.

"Well, he mos' gene'lly does when I fust git onter 'im, 'n ef he don't I c'n make 'im. Yu wanter see me make 'im buck?"

"Yes, I wisht yu would; I never seen one do it yit." So she

followed him out to where his pony was picketed and stood by while he saddled up.

"Now yu git back er little ways an' I'll show you some tall pitchin'," said Dunk, as he put his left foot in the stirrup.

When she was at a safe distance he mounted, and the wiry little beast, according to his custom, made a few stiff-legged jumps. But this did not satisfy his rider. He and his steed were on exhibition, and there must be some showing off. So he surprised the pony by tickling him with his sharp spurs in the flank. The broncho snorted resentfully and began to make vicious protest. With his back bent like a bow, he went up into the air, his four feet, head and tail bunched beneath him, and looking for a moment as if suspended by his middle; then he dropped hard, and rose again as before. This he did time after time, Dunk meanwhile



spurring hard, the broad rim of his hat flapping up and down, and now and then a dislodged cartridge dropping from his belt. But he sat the brute grandly and placidly through all the tumult, and smiled back over his shoulder proudly at Del, who clapped her hands and giggled in applause.

Mrs. Woods and the children had also become spectators to the performance, and the hearty dame was garrulous in her praise of the horsemanship of her favorite. "Jes' look at 'im, Del! look at 'im!" she cried out. "They ain't nobody in ther State er Kansis c'n set on that hoss five seckins—an' jis' watch Dunk! W'y, I wouldn' be afear'd ter trus' my baby with 'im up thar!"

"Does ride mighty good," said Del.

When the pony was quite winded and conquered, Dunk walked him quietly up to where the girl stood. "He won' hurt yu," he said, as she moved back a step; "he's er kitten now, I

tell yer—but say—Del—don't yer want me ter bring down my gray pony fer yu ter ride? He wuz raised er pet an' sev'al wimmin's bin on 'im, an' he's jis ez gentle."

"W'y, I wisht yer would, Mister—that is, hih—hih!—Dunk. I ain't rid much, but I wouldn' be afeared 'f yu wuz 'long with me," and she glanced up at the delighted fellow coquettishly.

"I'll bring 'im down termorrer!" said he, picking up his reins.

"Will yer? All right, 'n' I'll be ready, time yer come, an' we'll have er big ride," said Del.

"That's whut we'll have! Well, I reck'n I better move." He reached down and had the handshake he had been thinking of for the last five minutes, and loped away, waving his arm at the others and sending back a cheerful "*Buenos tardes!*"

Mrs. Woods smiled, and turned away her face to keep from embarrassing Dunk, when he came alongside the front door, early the next morning, riding the brown pony and leading the gray. But she welcomed him warmly, and showed him where to find her side-saddle, and how to pad it so that it wouldn't hurt the pony's back. And by the time Dunk had swung the clumsy, creaking thing into place and strapped it tight, Del, dressed in a ridiculously long-tailed habit, was at his elbow, ready for the ride. She was giggly as usual, and a little excited, and her nervousness communicated itself to Dunk when he lifted her from the doorstep to the saddle. In a minute more they were off, Del bobbing up and down as the pony loped, Dunk rocking easily along beside her, with attentive eye and his left hand ready to grasp her rein in case her mount should get too frisky.

The excursion was a success. Del enjoyed it greatly, and Dunk, throughout the time it occupied, was "livin' fo' weeks t' ther minit," as he said afterwards in talking it over with himself.

And these two had other such experiences as this. After the late round-up Dunk had much leisure, and on many a fine, warm day during that mild winter, he and Del cantered here and there over the huge gray mat of dead grass that upholstered the hard earth of the levels, or plowed through the sand-piles, or clambered about the foot-hills of the mesa.

Old Hank Woods and his wife noticed with much satisfaction how things were going with Dunk and Del, and they had a good deal of fun, poking at the girl many jocular insinua-

tions, to which she responded with giggles. But they were easy with Dunk. He was "a little tetchy," Hank said, "and li'ble ter git hot erbout it." The Hash-Knife boys seldom let the subject drop while they were awake and enough of them were together to carry on a conversation, and they cracked a good many rough jokes at Dunk's expense,—when he was absent—and nothing but the fear of his heavy hand stayed their tongues when he was at hand.

Dunk never did entirely get over his shyness in the presence of the girl he loved, even after the courtship was several months old, and how he ever brought his diffuse ardor to a burning focus was a thing which went ever unexplained; but there was no lack of evidence that he did it on a bright February day, while he and his companion followed one of the wrinkles that ran down from the mesa, and general knowledge of it was soon extant. Indeed, denial of it would have been useless. The very air knew it at once and rallied the pair upon it, flicking Dunk's ear with the ends of his neckerchief, teasingly tickling Del about the throat with her hat-strings. The cow-pomes, sly fellows, knew all about it, and as they galloped side by side, out of time, the brown lifting himself as the gray descended, they nudged each other with their noses, and winked back their ears knowingly at their riders.

That same afternoon Dunk hunted up Shorty and Lafe, the half-forgotten two-thirds of a disintegrated triumvirate. For once the man of amiable reticence was bursting to be communicative. Joy, joy was with him, in him, exuding from him! At the Home Ranch he was told that his friends were over on the Flat, twelve miles to the east, turning back some Texas cattle that had browsed across the Hash-Knife lines. He rode hard and reached the camp at nightfall. The cook was at the fire, frying flap-jacks. Dunk knew that when two hundred yards away, for he could see a stooping figure silhouetted against the blaze that flared up on the gathering dusk whenever the flipping over of a cake splashed grease upon the embers.

The rest of the party were variously engaged. Some were picketing their horses, others were making wide circuits, gathering stray bits of mesquite root wherewith to feed the fire. The Twins lolled at full length on a grassy knoll. Shorty had just inquired of Lafe when he had seen Dunk. "Not for some time," Lafe had answered; "but 'tain't no trick ter find 'im 'f yer know ther way ter Hank Woodses."



Shorty smiled broadly. "Reck'n yu're right," said he; "jis stake out that ther little critter f'm Dodge, an' yer don' hafter hobble Dunk—yu'll allus ketch him er grazin' roun' thar som'eres—hello, here he comes now!"

The boys got up and greeted Dunk warmly as he threw himself to the ground and came toward them with outstretched hand and springing step.

"He's fixed it, b'gosh!" said Lafe, with sudden prescience.

"Hev yer, Dunk?" asked Shorty.

The happy fellow squeezed a hand of each of his friends and stood between them, smiling first right and then left.

"That's whut I done, boys, an' don't yer furgit it," he burst out, and then lowered his tone as he saw the cook look up from his frying.

"Yu durned ole sneak!"

"Yu blame, deceivin' ole tramp!"

Then they beat him on the back and pranced around him and roared out laughter that could be heard a mile. And Dunk, laughing too, and as nearly hysterical as such a solid piece of masculinity could be, pretended to fend off the blows, and dodged about like a school-boy.

"I knowed yu'd be glad," he said, when their congratulatory extravagance had subsided.

"Glad ain't no name for it, we're jis' tickled ter death," said Lafe. "Now stake yer pony out an' stay here to-night an' tell us all erbout how yer worked it."

"No, I mus' git erlong, but I'll stay ter chuck with yer." He unrolled his lariat, tied an end about his horse's neck, slipped the bridle off and started the animal with a slap on the hip. Then he dropped down on the grass, and took a turn of the rope around his foot. "Let 'im pick er little," said he.

Lying there, he undid his wallet of joy and added to his stock by the process. It was a great relief to him, and the rough, hearty fellows who listened were sympathetic and mightily interested, and even Shorty, of the flitting, ridiculous hope, felt no envious pang at the recital. Having cautioned the boys against a too indiscriminate circulation of the news, and promised a big treat for the Hash-Knife boys "long erbout brandin' time," Dunk helped them devour the flapjacks and went home through the night in placid rapture.

Two days before the time set for Dunk's wedding, the Twins, who had duly notified all the horse-riding conservators of the

Hash-Knife brand of the time and place wherein the event would be celebrated, rode over to Dunk's cabin to tell him that the branding of calves might make them late. They found



Dunk in what he called the "little room." He was tacking a thin muslin curtain over the window.

"Gee! but yu've got this little cuddy diked up!" said Shorty, when they had been shaken by the hand and seated.

"Well, I've been er gittin' little things erlong when I got er chance—what yer think er ther fixins?" He pointed to a snug bed upon whose pillows were "shams," upon which were embroidered long-legged birds of a kind unknown to the ornithology of this planet.

"Them's fine. Whur'd yer git um?"

"That ther dressmaker at Springer made um fer me; she says they're all ther style in Santy Fee."

"How much did they set yer back," inquired Shorty, who paid great heed to the money value of things.

"Fo' dollars an' six bits."

"Well, they're wuth it," he commented, with sagely puckered lips. Lafe, roaming about, now made a discovery.

"Durned 'f he ain't got 'er picter, too!"

Shorty moved over to where his partner stood, and Dunk turned his face that way, smiling and full of pride.

"Yeah, she gimme that—I kinder fixed them things on it—thought it looked better'n hangin' up jis dry so." He had woven some wiry stalks of swamp-grass about the little tin-type, and the work was, indeed, delicately done.

"It's jis zackly like 'er too," was Shorty's comment.

"That's whut's ther matter," added Lafe.

Half an hour later, as the boys were leaving, Shorty said:

"Well, we'll be erlong ez early ez we kin git through—'bout ten erlock, I reck'n. How yer goin' ter manage 'bout gittin' her up?"

"Oh, I'm goin' ter ride down an' ther preacher'll be thar, I got that fixed, an' after ther—" Dunk laughed and stammered—"after it's all over, ole Hank's goin' ter drive us up in his wagin—but we'll be er settin' up fer yer, an' they'll be good stuff ter drink an' smoke, an' I want all er yu fellers ter have er good time."

"Aw, don't yer fret about us; I reck'n we know how ter 'hoop er up when we git er chance! Good-by, an' luck ter yu. Luck, ole man!"

"Same ter yu, boys; now don't fergit ter come!"

"Not much; we ain't overlookin' no sich games ez that!" shouted one of them through the dark; and they were gone.

The spring air blew mildly upon Dunk as he rode down to Hank Woods's ranch to get married. The sunshine had just enough warmth in it, and it felt good to him. Some small white butterflies, winged blossoms, drifted down the gentle breeze and lingered fitfully a space about his head, as he jogged into the wavering course along which they sailed. Dunk thought them very pretty, and smiled without knowing why. He wore new clothes, and he occasionally glanced down at them approvingly, and now and then picked a speck of lint from sleeve or collar. He had timed his arrival so that he should have a short period for consultation with Del and the family before the preacher came. He wanted to get a few instructions relative to his behavior during the impending ordeal, and it was early in the afternoon when he reached the ranch.

The chickens that picked about the dooryard fled with fluttering wings before his brisk step. Little Abe Woods and his sister edged around the corner of the house shyly, and said "Hello, Dunk!" in subdued tones, and stopped and stared, instead of rushing up to him according to their custom, and impeding his

progress by clinging to his knees. They were impressed by his splendid clothes, and stood somewhat in awe of him because he was in them.

"Hello, young uns! Whutcher yawpin' at?" he called out; and as he realized the cause of their embarrassment he laughed and cracked his quirt at them.

The next instant Mrs. Woods opened the door and stood in it; but Dunk hardly recognized her. The characteristic jollity of her rotund face was gone, and in its place was a solemn, set expression, and motherly sympathy was in the eyes that filled with tears as they met Dunk's eager, anxious gaze.

"Whut's wrong, Miz Woods? They ain't nuthin' happened ter Hank? None o' ther chillun ain't——" But he knew the little folks were all right, for he had just met two of them, and he could see, through the open door, the usually frantic baby lying quietly asleep at the foot of the bed.

"No, no, ther trouble's all yourn, pore boy. Come in an' set down." Her voice was full of what was in her face—grief and pity.

Dunk's feet were heavy as he lifted them up the step. He was stricken with sudden weakness. It was as if his body felt a blow before his mind had time to tell him one had fallen. He followed Mrs. Woods in, but did not heed her invitation to sit. Something had happened to him he knew; he stood in the middle of the floor numb. He remembered to have felt so once before when he came to where there was warmth, after riding all day through a freezing norther.

Mrs. Woods dropped down upon the bed and sat bent over, with one hand to her face.

"Oh, Dunk, I cain't tell yer!" she said. "Hank jes' wouldn'—he got on his hoss an' loped off som'ers, and said it wuz er durn piece er bunco bus'ness, an' he wan't goin' ter have nothin' ter do with it, an' he cussed ever' breath—an' I cain't tell yer neither—I won't. Del!" she called out, "Del, yu come in here an' tell 'im yerse'f; ther blame 's all yourn——"

"Whut blame? She talks like I'd been er stealin' sumpn', don't she, Dunk? hih—hih!" Del had come in swiftly as she spoke, and now stood before him, with a flush on her face and her lips parted; but her giggle was forced and nervous. "We never reely intended on gittin' married, did we, Dunk?" she went on, catching her breath. "We wuz jist in fun all ther time, wuzn't we?"

His brown beard looked black against the pallor that came into his face while she was speaking, and the muscles of his jaws had hard work getting his lips apart, but he said, "Yes; jist in fun."

"An' yu ez good ez knowed 'at I wuz promused ter ther young feller f'm Denver, didn' yer, Dunk?" continued Del, anxious to justify herself before her aunt.

"Co'se—I knowed that," he answered again, in the same strange way. Then the rigidity of his pose relaxed; he slowly turned his staring eyes from her, and his figure slouched down until he seemed to lose three inches of stature. "I mus' be gittin' on back," he said, in a low tone, as he made a step toward the door.

"Dunk, don't go jist yit; I want ter talk t' yer a little!" exclaimed Mrs. Woods, rising hastily from the bed.

"Mus' be gittin' on back," he repeated, without looking around or stopping.

He went straight out to his pony, mounted him, spurred him, and was off at a hard gallop.

The pressing grief he felt urged him to nothing but blind, heedless motion. He just wanted to go—hard, fast. Even



after he had turned the point of the mesa, he kept spurring his frantic pony until it stretched out under him, nearly straight, at the very top of its speed.

He was clear off the road, floundering madly over the uneven turf. He hung over the horn of his saddle, staring downward at the things that streamed by him—tufts of bunch grass, mesquite roots, prairie-dog holes. His stirrup fenders tore through

the tops of the weeds with a ripping sound. When the pony had pawed away a mile or two of sand and sod, Dunk drew his rein and slowly picked his way back to the wagon road. The rest of the journey was made at a jog trot.

He looked up only once, that was at the seven-mile point. He lifted his head and fixed his gaze for an instant upon The Face. The great, unmindful thing, with stern visage stared as it ever had, straight out over the broad landscape, over cattle and men—ignoring them. But it was there; Dunk saw that and turned his eyes to earth again.

The sun was still a half-hour high when he reached his cabin. He took off the pony's bridle and saddle, and turned him loose on the range. The little beast, fagged and sweaty, cut no capers when set free, but walked off stiffly a few yards and dropped down and rolled in the dust, groaning.

Dunk went slowly into the house. As he entered the little room, a slim finger of light, that came through a crack in the window-shutter, pointed out Del's picture. He strode to it and tore it from its slight fastening, shattering the dried grass frame. He held the small tin thing before him; Del smirked up at him from the palm of his hand. "Jist in fun!" he said, after a long stare. His big hand shut tightly on the picture, bending the thin metal double. He threw up his arm as if to dash the cruel reminder to the floor, but he did not. He flung himself diagonally across the bed, so that his face sank into one of the bird-decked pillows. With his right arm he hugged the other pillow close to him, and his right hand still held the picture, crushing it.

For several hours he lay there thus. It was nearly ten o'clock when he stiffly stood up and dropped the tin-type on the bed and struck a match. He suddenly remembered that the boys were to come that night and it surprised him, when he looked at his watch, to see how late it was.

"I'll show um 'at I wuzn't jist in fun," he said to himself, as he lighted a candle and went into the front room to prepare for his guests. The demijohn of "Sour Mash" gave out a hospitable "gook, gook," as Dunk lifted it out of the box in which he had brought it down from Springer. "B'gosh, I'll go yer!" said he in a hard tone, as if in answer to the big bottle's cheerful invitation. Taking a pint cup from the small shelf over the stove, he tilted the demijohn and filled the tin with whiskey.

"Can't feel no wuss, nohow," he said bitterly, as with a reckless swing he brought the cup to his lips. But he took it

down again and began slowly pouring the contents back into the demijohn. "'Twould' be jist wastin' good lick—'twouldn' do me no good—they ain't nuthin' 'at'll kyore er fool o' bein' er fool, I reck'n." As he said this his broad chest grew broader with a deep inspiration, and then collapsing, gave out a sigh that was, at the end, a groan.

He set out tin cups for fifteen, and a pail containing water for those who cared to taste so mild a beverage, and had just placed conspicuously a box full of long and very black cigars, when he heard a mixture of shouts and pistol shots which told him that his friends were near. At this a panic seized him. He had intended to stand in the doorway and welcome them and make light of his misfortune as best he could, but he knew now that his grief was too strong for him, so he threw wide the outer door and went back into the little room, and locked the door.

Bang! bang! "'Hoop 'er up, boys!" Bang! bang! "Ow-wow-wow-wow-o-o-o-o-p!"

It was a hurricane of noise that came whirling up through the tranquil night. The hoof-beats, yells, and volleys resounded far, and Dunk, lying silent in the little room, wished with all his might that every ball he heard fly shrieking from the powder could, by some circuitous and eccentric route, find lodgment in his heart.

In a few moments the hilarious cow-punchers came stamping in at the open door. "Come on in, boys, ther ole man's got ther lay-out all fixed for us, like he said he would!" shouted Lafe, leading the way.

"Durned ef he ain't bought er box er seegyars, too!" said another appreciative guest.

"Well, I reck'n!" said Shorty, who had waddled over to the demijohn and pulled the cork. "Jist take er whiff er this here stuff an' see 'f yer don' feel like yer c'd lick yer daddy—pass yer jiggers over; I'll fill 'em up!"

"Tha's right, Shorty, load 'em up; we'll do ther unloadin', huh—huh!" exclaimed a jocular young fellow at his elbow.

With guffaw and joke and rattle of spurs, they placed themselves about the table, each one possessing himself of a "loaded jigger" and a "seegyar." Then Lafe spoke again.

"Now, 'fo' we th'ow this here fust one down, le's make Dunk come out an' fetch ther little gal he's hooked onter, an' drink um luck."

"Bully!" "Now yer shoutin'!" cried out a half-dozen

voices, and several more began to shout, "A-e-e-h thar, ole man!" "Come out er thar, Dunk!" "Show yerse'f, yer lucky ole cuss!" One near the inner door rapped upon it loudly, and it opened and Dunk stood in it.

"Ther little gal—trot 'er out, too, ole man!" a voice called out, and then a dead silence fell upon them all, for they saw Dunk's stiff, white face. He glanced around once, and then dropped his eyes.

"Boy's, I'm glad yer come, but—" his lips moved on and shaped words, but his voice had caught somewhere; it came at last—"they ain't no little gal. She th'owed me, boys—she wuz jist in fun, I guess—that's whut she said. They wuz another feller—that ther drummer whut wuz at ther dance—yu know. I'd ruther not say no mo' 'bout it now. Jist go on an' turn yerse'ves loose—don' bother 'bout me. I think I'll go lay down erwhile." And he shut himself in.

For a few seconds the group of sunburnt plainsmen stood and scowled at each other, and not a few absently felt back and touched the revolvers that swung at their hips. Then they remembered that this was not a case that could be adjudicated by frontier methods.

At last Lafe said, "Fellers, this here ain't no place fer hoopin' things up. We may's well drink whut we got po'd out, 'cause they's no use er wastin' it—then le's go home."

"Tha's whut's ther matter, Lafe, we'll go yer," assented one of the older men. No one offered a toast, and they drank silently. And then, with little noise, they left the house.



There were many muttered curses mixed with the talk as they rode slowly away into the darkness.

The Twins jogged over to their little hovel at the Home Ranch, close together, but silent. Having hobbled their horses, they lugged their heavy saddles into the house, dropped them upon the dirt floor, and

Lafe struck a match while Shorty felt for the candlestick. Five minutes later, each had climbed into his bunk, forgetting to put out the light. Noticing this, Lafe sat up, reached down to the floor for a boot, and having got it, took aim at the candle and



drew back his arm. In this pose he rested for a second or two, deep in thought.

"I wisht she wuz er man!" he said.

"An' we had 'im here—yu bet!"

"Yu bet!"

Lafe's lifted arm came down, the boot flew from his hand, and there was darkness and the clatter of tin.

It was a good shot.



## ANTONIO'S ENGLISHMAN \*

BY W. L. ALDEN

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ANTONIO was young, handsome, and a gondolier. He lacked but two things: a gondola of his own, and an Englishman. He was too poor, to buy a gondola, and though he occasionally hired an old and extremely dilapidated one, and trusted to his handsome face to enable him to capture a party of foreign ladies, his profits had to be divided with the owner of the gondola, and were thus painfully small. The *traghetto* brought him in a few francs per month, and he picked up other small sums by serving as second oar, whenever tourists could be convinced that a second oar was necessary. Still, Antonio was desperately poor, and he and his young wife were often uncomfortably hungry.

Now, if the Madonna would only send him an Englishman, even if it were only for a single year, Antonio could easily save enough money to buy himself a beautiful gondola, besides living in the lap of luxury. His brother Spiro had owned an Englishman for only seven months and a half, and already he was a capitalist, with his own gondola, and, figure it to yourself!—with four hundred francs in the savings bank! And Spiro had done nothing to deserve this blessing, for he was notoriously an unbeliever, and never went inside a church except when he was escorting English ladies, when, of course, he prayed with fervor at the most conspicuous shrine, which was worth at least ten extra soldi of *buona mano*. Whereas, Antonio was deeply religious, and at least once a year gave a wax candle to the Blessed Virgin of Santa Maria Zobenigo. “But patience!” said Antonio daily to himself. “Some day the Madonna will grow weary, and will say, ‘Give that Antonio an Englishman, so that I can have a little peace and quiet.’ And then the Englishman will appear, and Antonio’s fortune will be made.”

Of course Antonio knew of every foreigner who came to Venice with the intention of making a prolonged stay. There

\* A selection from “The Strand.”

is no detective police in the world that can be compared with the Venetian gondolier in learning the ways and purposes of tourists. To know all about the foreigner is at once his business and his capital. The Englishman who comes to Venice and determines to spend six months or a year in that enchanted city, may reach this decision on a Saturday night and mention it to no living soul. Yet by the following Monday morning all the gondoliers in Venice know that there is an Englishman to be striven for, and they have even settled in their own minds precisely what apartment he will probably hire. How they arrive at this knowledge it is not for me to say. There are mysteries in the Venice of to-day, as there were in the Venice of the Ten and of the Three.

Now, it fell out that one day Antonio learned that an Englishman and his wife, a young couple, who had every appearance of sweet temper and scant knowledge of the world, had arrived at the *Albergo Luna*, and had told the porter that they intended to take a house and live forever in Venice. The porter was an intimate friend of Antonio, and had been promised a handsome commission on any foreigner whom he might place in Antonio's hands. Within an hour after receiving the precious information, Antonio had put on his best shirt, had said ten Aves at lightning speed, had promised the Blessed Virgin two half-pound wax candles in case he should land this desirable Englishman, and was back again at the *Luna* and waiting to waylay his prey.

The porter presented Antonio, and asserted that, as a combination of professional skill and moral beauty, Antonio was simply unique. Mr. Mildmay, the Englishman in question, was pleased with Antonio's clean shirt, and Mrs. Mildmay was captivated by his chestnut curls, and the frank, innocent expression of the young fellow's face. He was hired on the spot, with the new gondola which he professed to own, for 150 francs per month, including his board. He was to bring his gondola and his recommendations to the hotel to be inspected that afternoon, and was to begin his duties on the following day, the Mildmays having already secured an apartment in advance of their arrival in Venice.

The long-hoped-for fortune had arrived at last. "He is a man of excellent heart, the *paron*," said Antonio to the porter. "He will be as wax in my hands; already I love him and the sweet *parona*. You shall have your share of him, my Zuane. No one can say that I am not a just man."

Antonio hurried at once from the hotel with a note from the porter to a dealer in gondolas, certifying that the bearer had secured a most eligible Englishman. He had to pay a heavy price for the hire by the month of a nearly new gondola, but the payments were to form part of the purchase-money, and Antonio did not grudge the price. Then he stopped at his house to show the new gondola to his wife, and tell her the blessed news, and then, armed with his baptismal certificate, and an old letter from a notary, informing him that the funeral expenses of his father must be paid or serious consequences would follow, he returned to the hotel.

The Mildmays were satisfied with the gondola, and with Antonio's recommendations; for they could not read Italian handwriting, and when Antonio informed them that the notary's letter was a certificate that he was the most honest man in Venice, and that it had been given him by a German Prince whom he had served ten years, they were not in a position to contradict the assertion. Moreover, they were already half in love with the handsome and happy face of their gondolier, and would have taken him without any recommendation at all, sooner than have taken an old and ugly gondolier with the recommendation of the British Consul and the resident chaplain. The next day Antonio entered upon his duties, and began the joyous task of making hay while the sun of the Englishman shone on him.

The gondolier in private service in Venice does many things wholly unconnected with his boat. He usually waits on his master's table; he polishes the concrete floors, and he is sent on every variety of errand. Antonio was tireless, respectful, and cheerful, and the Mildmays agreed that he was an ideal servant. Of course they responded to his suggestion that he needed a livery, and he was soon furnished at their expense with a handsome suit of heavy blue cloth, a picturesque hat, a silk sash, and an overcoat. He looked very handsome in his new dress, and the difference between what he paid the tailor and what he charged his master provided his wife and his little boy with their entire wardrobe for the coming winter.

Venice is a cold city after the winter fogs begin, and when Antonio advised the Mildmays to lay in their entire stock of firewood in September instead of waiting until the price should be higher, they said to one another what a comfort it was to have a servant who really looked after their interests. So Antonio was commissioned to buy the wood, and he bought it. He made a

handsome commission on the transaction, and, in addition, he had about one-fifth of the whole amount of wood delivered at his own residence. It is true that this was not quite enough to provide him fuel for the entire winter, but the deficiency could easily be remedied by simply carrying home three or four sticks under his coat every night, and Antonio was not a man who shrank from any honest labor when the good of his family was in view.

About ten days after the arrival of his Englishman, Antonio informed him that the gondola needed to go to the *squero* to have its bottom cleaned, at a cost of ten francs. This, however, he insisted upon paying out of his own pocket, because the foulness of the bottom had been incurred before he entered Mr. Mildmay's service. This scrupulous display of honesty still further convinced the Englishman that he had the pearl of gondoliers, and when the next day Antonio asked him to give him as a loan, to be deducted from his future wages, fifty francs, wherewith to make certain essential but wholly unintelligible repairs to the gondola, Mr. Mildmay was of his wife's opinion that it would be a shame to require the poor man ever to repay it.

The first thing that shook the Mildmays' confidence in Antonio was a little incident in connection with a chicken. They had had a pair of roast fowls for dinner and had eaten only one, intending to have the other served cold for luncheon the next day. When late in the evening Mrs. Mildmay accidentally discovered Antonio in the act of going out of the house with the cold fowl stuffed under his coat, she demanded an explanation. "It is true, *parona*," said Antonio, "that I took the fowl. And why? Because all the evening I had seen you and the *paron* sitting together in such love and happiness that my heart bled for poor Antonio, who has no happy fireside at which to sit. And so I said to myself, 'Antonio! surely you deserve a little happiness as well as these good and noble people! Take the cold fowl, and eat it with love and gratitude in your heart!'"

Mrs. Mildmay could not scold him after this defense, and she simply contented herself with telling him that he might keep the fowl for this time, but that such a method of equalizing the benefits of fortune must not occur again. Antonio promised both her and himself that it should not, and though he continued to keep his wife's table fully supplied from that of the Mildmays, the latter never again found him in possession of surreptitious chickens.

One day Antonio found a gold piece, twenty francs in fact, on

the floor of his gondola. He knew it must have been dropped by the *paron*, and he promptly brought it to him. "How wrong I was," said Mrs. Mildmay, "to doubt the poor fellow because of that affair of the chicken. No one would ever have been the wiser if he had kept that twenty-franc piece, but he brought it to us like an honest man." For once she was right in believing Antonio to be honest. Nothing could have induced him to sully his soul and hands by unlawfully detaining his master's money. He was determined to make all the money out of his providential Englishman that he could make in ways that every gondolier knows to be perfectly legitimate, but he was no thief, and Mr. Mildmay could fearlessly have trusted him with all the money in his purse.

Antonio was now one of the happiest men in Venice, but one morning he came to Mr. Mildmay with a face of pathetic sadness, and asked for a day's holiday. "It is not for pleasure that I ask it," he said; "my only pleasure is to serve the best of masters. But my little boy is dead, and is to be buried to-day. I should like to go with the coffin to San Michele."

Mr. Mildmay was unspeakably touched by the man's sorrow and the quiet heroism with which he bore it. He gave him the day's holiday and fifty francs towards the funeral expenses of his child. When Antonio appeared in the morning, quiet, sad, but scrupulously anxious to do his whole duty, the Mildmays felt that they really loved the silent and stricken man.

Misfortune seemed suddenly to have run amuck at Antonio. A week after the death of his child, he announced in his usual quiet way that his wife was dead. It was very sudden, so he said. He did not know exactly what was the disease, but he thought it was rheumatism. The Mildmays thought it strange that rheumatism should have carried off a woman only twenty-two years old, but strange things happen in Venice, and the climate is unquestionably damp. Antonio only asked for a half-holiday to attend the funeral, and he added that unless the *paron* could advance him two hundred francs of his wages, he should be unable to save his wife from being buried in the common ditch. Of course, this could never be permitted, and Antonio received the two hundred francs, and Mrs. Mildmay told her husband that if he should think of deducting it from the unhappy man's wages, she could never respect him again.

For a time the darts of death spared the household of Antonio. The gondola made its alleged monthly visit to the *squero* to have

its bottom cleaned at Mr. Mildmay's expense, and the amount of repairs and paint which it needed did seem unexpectedly large. But Antonio was not foolishly grasping. So long as he doubled his wages by tradesmen's commissions, and by little devices connected with the keeping of the gondola, he felt that he was combining thrift with prudence. He made, however, one serious mistake, of which he afterwards repented when it was too late. Instead of giving the Madonna the two wax candles which he had promised her, he gave her two stearine candles, trusting that she would not notice the difference. It was not in keeping with his honest and religious character, and there were times when the recollection of it made him feel uneasy.

As the winter wore on, Antonio's devotion to his employers never slackened. Beyond the commissions which it is but just and right that the faithful gondolier should exact from those dogs of tradesmen, even if they did charge the same commissions in his master's bills, he was tireless in protecting the Mildmays from imposition. He was never too tired to do anything that he was asked to do, and although, when his brother Spiro was temporarily out of employment, Antonio discovered that there was nearly always too much wind to render it safe to take the gondola out with a single oarsman, and that he would therefore furnish a second oarsman in the person of Spiro at his master's expense, he never intimated that he was not ready to row hour after hour while the Mildmays explored the city and the lagoon. Mr. Mildmay was fascinated by the narrow Venetian streets, and spent hours exploring alone every part of the city. He was probably perfectly safe in so doing, for highway robbery and crimes of violence are almost unknown in Venice; but, for all that, he was always, though without his knowledge, accompanied on his walking excursions by the stealthy and unsuspected Antonio, who kept out of sight, but in readiness to come to his assistance should the necessity arise.

Toward Spring Antonio thought it best to have his wife's mother die, but to his surprise Mr. Mildmay did not offer to pay the old lady's funeral expenses. He drew the line at mothers-in-law, and Antonio received only his half-holiday to accompany the corpse to the cemetery. This miscarriage made Antonio think more than ever of that failure to keep his promise to the Madonna in the matter of the wax candles, and he sometimes wondered if she were capable of carrying her resentment so far as to take his Englishman from him.

There is gas in Venice, but the judicious householder does not use it, save when he desires to enshroud his rooms in a twilight gloom. If he wishes a light strong enough to read by, he burns petroleum. It was, of course, Antonio who supplied the petroleum to the Mildmay household, and equally, of course, he bought the poorest quality and charged for the dearest. Now, in spite of all the care which a timid person may lavish on a lamp burning cheap petroleum, it is nearly certain sooner or later to accomplish its mission of setting somebody or something on fire, and Antonio's petroleum, which was rather more explosive than gunpowder, unaccountably spared the inmates of the *casa* Mildmay until the month of March, when it suddenly asserted itself.

It happened in this way. One evening Mrs. Mildmay took a lamp in her hand and started to cross the wide and slippery floor of her drawing-room. The rug on which she trod moved under her, and in the effort to save herself she dropped the lamp. It broke, and in an instant she was in a blaze.

Antonio was in the ante-room. The door was open and he saw the accident. He sprang to Mrs. Mildmay's assistance. He did not attempt to avoid the flames, but rushed directly through the pool of blazing oil, burning his feet and ankles horribly. He seized Mrs. Mildmay and tore away her dress with his bare hands. He had nothing to wrap around her, for he was wearing no coat at the time, but he clasped her close in his arms, and smothered the flames that had caught her petticoat by pressing her against his bosom. She escaped with nothing worse than a slightly burned finger, but Antonio's hands, arms, feet, and ankles were burned to the bone. By this time Mr. Mildmay, who had been in his study, heard his wife calling for help, and made his appearance.

Antonio asked the *parona's* permission to sit down for a moment, and then fainted away. The cook was called and sent for the doctor. She met Antonio's brother in the *calle*, close to the house, and sent him upstairs. With his help Antonio was carried to Mrs. Mildmay's bedroom and laid on the bed, and before the doctor came the wounded man regained consciousness and thanked the Mildmays for their care of him.

The doctor, after dressing the wounds, said that the man might very probably recover. But Antonio announced that he was about to die, on hearing which decision the doctor changed his mind.

“When a Venetian of the lower class gives up, and says he



is going to die," said the doctor, "no medical science can save him. Your man will die before morning, if he has really lost all hope. There! he says he wants a priest; you might as well order his coffin at once. I can do nothing to save him."

"*Paron*," said Antonio, presently, "would you, in your great goodness, permit my wife to come to see me for the last time?"

"You shall have anything you want, my brave fellow," replied Mr. Mildmay, "but I thought your wife was dead."

"I was mistaken about it," said Antonio. "It was her twin sister who died, and they were so much alike that their own mother could not tell them apart. No, my poor wife is still alive. May she bring my little boy with her?"

"Tell her to bring anybody you may want to see," replied his master, "but I certainly thought your little boy was buried last January."

"The *paron* is mistaken, if he will pardon me for saying so. It was my little girl who died. Was it not so, Spiro?"

Spiro confirmed Antonio's statement, like a loyal brother who is afraid of no fraternal lie, and Mr. Mildmay had not the heart to trouble the sufferer with any more doubts of his veracity.

Antonio was duly confessed, and received absolution. "Did you tell the father about the candles?" whispered Spiro after the priest had gone.

"I thought," answered Antonio, "that perhaps the Madonna had not yet noticed that they were not wax, and that it would not be wise to tell her of it, just as one is going where she is."

In the early morning Antonio died with the smile of an innocent little child on his face. "I have served the dear *paron* faithfully," he said, just as he died. "I know he will take care of my wife and child. And he will take Spiro as his gondolier."

Mr. Mildmay religiously carried out Antonio's dying request. He installed Spiro in the place of the dead man, and he settled an annuity on Zanze, the disconsolate widow. He gave Antonio a grave all to himself in San Michele, and a beautiful white marble tombstone, with the epitaph, "Brave, Faithful, and Honest." He came to know somewhat later how Antonio had enriched himself at his expense, but he said to his wife: "After all, my dear, Antonio was strictly honest according to his own code. I think I have known some Englishmen of unblemished reputation, whose honesty, according to the English code, could not be compared with that of the poor boy who gave his life for yours."



## THE DEVIL'S SLIDE\*

*A Legend of the Rocky Mountains*

BY FREDERIC MORRIS



IN the heart of the Rocky Mountains there dwelt in ancient times a spirit or gnome, to whom the Indian tribes around about gave the name of Hal-Walla. He was a spirit of great power within the limits of his domain, which extended deep into the bowels of the earth. Myriads of inferior gnomes were subject to his rule, and were employed, under his wise dominion, in administering the business of his kingdom; checking and controlling the rude force of the fires that rage in the earth's bosom, and making it serviceable in charging the rocky fissures with ores and minerals.

\* Written for Short Stories. Illustrated.—Copyrighted.

But once in a while, in the course of the centuries, he tires of his monotonous and gloomy life, and then it is his habit to come to the surface for a holiday.

At first, in the far distant times, he found the earth inhabited by hideous monsters, and his only sport was to hunt the ichthyosaurus, or to plunge deep into the pathless forests, and engage in fierce encounter with a terrible biped, who is known to us only as the prehistoric man. Hal-Walla, however, was rather peaceable than warlike; and after a few such visits he wearied of this rough sport, and many centuries came and went before he visited the upper earth again. Great was his surprise to find that the monsters of the early times had disappeared; the giant forests had given place to woods of much smaller growth; but what interested the gnome most of all, was the sight of a number of Indian villages, which clustered in the peaceful valley below. The men, women, and little children were a revelation to Hal-Walla. They reminded him strangely of the fierce beings he had grappled with in the forests of prehistoric times, and yet they were so different. Clad in scant, bright-colored garments, their red skins shone with cunningly painted designs. Their manners were gentle—for it was a peaceable Indian tribe that had built its wigwams on Hal-Walla's domain. They were kind to their women, and the children played harmlessly about, shooting at marks with small bows and arrows, running swift races, or flying on their ponies over hill and dale.

Dwelling invisible and unsuspected among them, Hal-Walla took delight in studying the ways and habits of these beings, so new and strange to him. He soon learned their language, and often sat at night in their wigwams, listening to their talk about their ponies, their crops, the chase, or the danger that threatened from hostile tribes. And while the Spirit thus dwelt in their tents, their good fortune was wonderful. For Hal-Walla caused their crops to grow as they never did before; and no arrow sent after a buffalo or deer, no matter by how young and raw a hand, was known to miss its mark; and once, when a band of hostile red men came swarming over the mountains to attack the peaceful dwellers in the valley, he assumed a shape of terror, drove them before him like cattle, and slew them in great numbers.

All this led these simple folk to believe in the presence of a good being among them, and sweet to Hal-Walla were the words

of thanks and praise which he overheard at their camp-fires at night. But one day, as the gnome was roaming about the mountains, he spied a maiden, fair and beautiful—an Indian princess, the only daughter of the great Chief Winotah, of the powerful tribe of the Utes. She was seated, chatting with her girl playmates and attendants, at the foot of a huge waterfall, which went swirling and tumbling into a rude natural basin. The subsequent conduct of the gnome, as we shall presently see; would indicate that her innocent beauty impressed him deeply; for when, on the next day, the maidens came again to sit by the waterfall, they were amazed to find the scene wholly changed. Tall trees, which had not been there before, made a shady grove about it; the wild sweep of the cataract had been checked, so that it now fell with a gentle murmur into the basin, which had grown large and wide, and was filled to the brim with the cool, limpid water, showing the pebbly bottom in its transparent depth. "It is the Good Spirit who has done this," cried the maidens; and, amid wonder and laughter and congratulation, they speedily prepared for a bath. The princess was the first to venture in; but no sooner was she immersed, than she sank out of sight. Vainly her shrieking companions clutched at the glossy black hair, as they saw her disappear; and when Visula, the princess's favorite, plunged in to share her fate, some unseen power prevented her from sinking, and she could only float lightly on the limpid surface, like a petal from a wild rose.

Frightened and weeping, the girls returned to the village and imparted all that had happened to Winotah. The chief rent his garment, scattered to the winds the plumes that waved so proudly on his head, and grieved for the loss of his favorite daughter. After a while he took courage and went to view with his own eyes the fatal spot where she had disappeared. But the magical illusion was gone, and the waterfall tumbled in unbridled fury down the mountain-side, as it had ever done within the memory of man.

Meanwhile the princess, who had lost consciousness when she felt herself sinking, had been carried by Hal-Walla through his subterranean kingdom to a beautiful valley, which his magic had filled with wonders. When she awoke, she found herself reclining on a grassy knoll, dressed in bright garments; and the sunlight, glinting through the shady trees, fell on the form of a handsome young chief standing reverently before her. This was none other than Hal-Walla, who had assumed this pleasing

shape as being most likely to find favor in the eyes of the maid. In glowing words he spoke to her of love; told her the secret of his being; told her of his great kingdom in the bowels of the earth; of the power he possessed to bring good or evil fortune to her tribe; and so wooed her for his wife. But the princess only sighed in answer, and reproached him with tears for having removed her from her people. Nothing that Hal-Walla could say or promise seemed to give her cheer; and he was forced to realize that he had been too sudden, and must patiently seek to win her by degrees.

"These beings require companionship," he said to himself, when he had thought the matter over. "She must be amused; that will set everything right." And like a flash he flew out into the fields where the maize was ripening, picked a dozen ears, and brought them with a triumphant smile to the princess, who was wandering disconsolately under the trees.

"Fairest daughter of earth," said he, "I have brought what will give thee joy. Take these ears of maize; touch them with this magic rod, and give them the form of any being thy heart desires."

So saying, he wisely left the princess to herself, and she lost no time in availing herself of the gift. Touching one of the ears with the rod she cried: "Visula, dear playmate, appear!" and instantly Visula lay at her feet, kissing her hands, and, in her joy, laughing and weeping at once. The illusion was so perfect, that the princess knew not whether she held in her arms the real Visula or merely her shadow. But this gave her no concern. She surrendered herself wholly to the delight of having her dearest friend with her; and the two wandered arm-in-arm about the gardens and grottoes and groves with which the gnome had adorned the valley, to make it a pleasant abiding-place for his fair prisoner.

The beautiful princess soon converted all her supply of maize ears into the girl friends she was accustomed to. She was now far less lonely, and seemed to grow brighter and more content; so that Hal-Walla congratulated himself on his penetration and the progress he was making in the knowledge of human kind.

But as the weeks slipped by, the princess began to notice that her companions were growing pale and sickly. She alone, among them all, bloomed fresh and fair as a rose. One morning, when she stepped from her wigwam, what horror was hers when she saw that they had all turned old and haggard, and

were so weak that they could scarcely move. In her terror, she called loudly for Hal-Walla, who immediately appeared.

"Base Spirit," she cried, "is it not enough that thou hast deprived me of my freedom? Why take from me my only solace, the companionship of these dear maids? What has happened to them? Why do they look so old and strange?"

"Blame me not, fair maid," replied the Spirit. "They are, if you remember, but ears of maize. As long as they were fresh, the magic rod lent life and youth to the forms they borrowed. But now the juices of Nature are dried up within them, and soon they must return to dust. Do but touch them once again with your rod."

She did as she was bidden, and, as she touched them, the shadows vanished, and only a handful of dried-up maize ears remained.

"Weep not, fair one," continued the Spirit. "What our bounteous Mother Nature gave us once she will give again. In a flash I will return with a new supply."

So saying, he vanished, shot through space, and arrived at the maize field. But much to his embarrassment, he found that the maize had all been garnered, and not one ear remained. When he returned to the princess, she saw by his manner that something had gone wrong.

"Thou hast deceived me," cried she. "Where is the maize?"

"Maiden," he answered, "wilt thou forgive my want of foresight? Inexperienced in the ways of mankind, I wholly forgot that the maize had been garnered, and there is none left in the fields. Have patience with me but one short week, and thou shalt have maize ears in abundance."

The Spirit thereupon, with the help of his gnomes, quickly plowed and planted an acre of ground thick with the precious corn. The underground fires were made to heat the soil, while he poured rain in abundance from above. Quickly the green shoots poked their heads above the ground, and thrived and grew apace.

But with all his thoughtfulness and anxiety to please, not a smile or answering look could he win from the fair princess. Patiently he anticipated her every wish, hoping for the time when his devotion would be rewarded. But in this he reckoned without his host. He was, after all, but a novice in his study of the human heart, and had taken it for granted that the maid's

affections were disengaged. Poor Spirit! He knew not that the princess had no heart to give him, since for more than a year she had loved Idanha, a young chief of the tribe of the Shoshones, whom she was to have wedded at the period of the next new moon. But so closely had she kept the secret guarded in her bosom, that the gnome even now had no suspicion of the truth. While he worked by night and day to hasten the growth of the maize, which he fondly hoped would restore the maid to her wonted cheerfulness, her thoughts were busy with a plan of escape.

In a week's time, as the Spirit had promised, the maize was ripe. Each day the princess went to the field, plucked a few ears, and once more gave them forms of life. But to one of the ears she secretly gave the form of a magpie. "Fly, talking bird," said she, "till thou comest to the tribe of the Shoshones, and tell the young chief Idanha, that his beloved is foully held prisoner by the Spirit Hal-Walla, but is planning to escape. Bid him wait for me in the Valley of Pines, the third sleep from now, with horses and men. Begone, away!" The bird obediently rose in the air, and her eyes followed it longingly till it faded in the distance.

The young chief meanwhile had taken the disappearance of his dear princess greatly to heart. He became melancholy and sad; even the chase lost its attractions. In the depth of his misery he derived a gloomy comfort from the profound solitude of the forest, where he spent his time mourning her as dead. One day, as he sat brooding thus, the stillness about him was broken by the sharp, shrill utterance of his name. As he started to his feet, the cry was repeated, and he saw with amazement that it came from a magpie, who was sitting on one of the lower limbs of a gigantic fir-tree. With the illogical intuition of love, a vague hope thrilled through his soul, and, holding out his hand, he invited the bird to perch on his finger. The magpie accepted the invitation, delivered the message which the princess had sent, and then fluttered away, leaving the astonished Idanha in transports of happiness. With a cheerfulness to which he had long been a stranger, he returned to his wigwam, got together the braves, ponies, and provisions he needed, and set out straightway for the Valley of Pines.

On the third day the princess prepared to execute her plan. The sun was painting the hill-tops in golden glory, and the earth was fresh with the moist odors of the awakening day, when she

came forth from her wigwam in all the radiance of her beauty. Well she knew whom she would find lingering about; and when she advanced to meet him with a smile of promise upon her lips—the first she had ever bestowed upon the unhappy gnome—his rapture knew no bounds.

“Fair one,” cried he, “hast thou come at last to reward me for my long faithfulness? To say the word that will make me the happiest of my kind?”

The wily princess blushed and cast down her eyes.

“Immortal spirit,” she answered, “how can a mere daughter of earth withstand thee? It is true, thy gentle constancy has taken my heart captive; but what proof have I that thou wilt always be patient and kind, if I make thee my master, and consent to be thy spouse?”

“Set me any task thou wilt,” cried the gnome, joyfully, “that I may show how patient and obedient a slave I will be to thee; and I swear by my immortal being I will perform it.”

“Be it so,” said the shrewd princess. “If we are to be wed, I have a fancy for a grand festival. Go you, then, to the maize-field and make a faithful count of the ears that are growing there. But mind you make no mistake! Then will I give them the forms of the people of my tribe, that I may be wedded with dancing and feasting, as becomes the daughter of a great chief.”

Reluctant as the gnome was to part from the maid at the very moment when—as he fondly believed—his constancy and devotion had touched her heart, he had no choice but to obey. In a twinkling he was at the maize-field and busy with his task. But Hal-Walla was clumsy at counting, and in the eagerness and excitement of his new-born hopes he made so many mistakes that his figures were soon involved in an almost hopeless tangle.

The princess, meanwhile, had no sooner disposed of the gnome than she prepared for instant flight. She had a good, stout maize ear ready at hand, which a touch of the rod transformed into an enormous eagle, and as she lightly leaped upon his back, he soared into the air and bore her away. Floating high above the mountain-peaks, her sharp eyes scanned the varying panorama below, until they distinguished the Valley of Pines. With a steady hand she guided the eagle's flight to the spot where Idanha and his braves were waiting, and as the bird bore her in safety to the ground, she threw herself, delirious with joy, upon her lover's breast.

After wrestling long with the hateful problem, the gnome



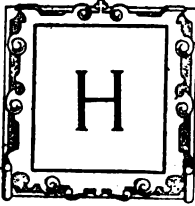
finally completed his task, and returned to lay the results at the feet of the maid. But when he found no trace of her either in the grove, the grotto or the garden, a dark suspicion flashed across his mind. Instantly rising to the height of the clouds, he spied his fair prisoner, her lover and his braves, just crossing the boundary of his domain, beyond which he had no power. With a wild howl of rage, he gathered up some clouds in his fist and hurled them after the fugitives. A terrific thunder-storm broke over their heads. Cursing the whole human race, and the feminine portion of it in particular, the gnome dashed madly into the tempest he had caused as best suited to his humor. Then taking a last look at the earth, which had suddenly grown hateful to him, with the thunder and lightning, wind and rain raging and warring and flashing about him, he threw himself headlong down the mountain-side into the bowels of the earth, and resumed the sway of his subterranean kingdom.

But the path he plowed through the rugged rocks as he shot downward still remains, like a gigantic causeway, and will in all likelihood endure thus till Time is gray. Truly, "the evil that men do lives after them,"—and the same may be said of spirits. The good that Hal-Walla had done was soon forgotten, and he was remembered only as the Evil Spirit, who had wickedly abducted the fair princess. And as the generations came and went, these rocks, marking the place of his violent descent, received the name of the "Devil's Slide."



## A LITTLE DISAPPOINTMENT \*

BY L. B. WALFORD



HE was the happiest boy in the works that day. He was not always very happy there, for it was not a happy chance which had thrown him into the place. But, like many others of the present day, young Hedwick Sotherton had found himself, at the age of nineteen, obliged to "do something" without having anything to do. So far he had had the splendid education, mental and physical, of one of the great English public schools. He had enjoyed the life with the peculiar appropriative, assimilative, absorptive gust of the typical schoolboy. His parents, had they not been in India, would probably have said that he had learned nothing. But he had. He had learned, at any rate, all that his uncle, Sir Hedwick—who was fond of the lad, and made him free of Sotherton Hall as regularly as the holidays came round—thought in the least necessary.

"Jolly nice boy," Sir Hedwick would say with his leisurely, satisfied smile. "Not a bad shot by any means. And humbly about with the keepers and stable fellows just as a boy ought. Heddy's as much at home here as I am myself."

This went on for five years. Then arose the moot point of Heddy's future.

Unluckily, Heddy had no particular bent, and, truth to tell, no particular brains. Competitive "Exams" were out of the question. Sir Hedwick, with a great roar of laughter, declared that no examiner would be fool enough to pass his nephew into the army or navy; and no partial relation, or friend, had certainly been found fool enough to suggest any other profession. Heddy a lawyer? or a doctor? or a parson? Nobody saw it. In regard to the latter alternative, there had indeed been a moment's consideration; for, to be sure, a parson need not be such a very learned man; and there was a family living; and it would be nice to have Heddy in and out of the Hall, ready to

\* A selection from "Longman's Magazine."

join in anything, tramp the stubble as of yore, and play his game of billiards with the points his uncle could still give him. But Heddy, to whom the proposal was ultimately made, in a half-hearted fashion, negatived it without hesitation; and Sir Hedwick's brow cleared in response, for, as the worthy baronet averred aside presently, somehow he did not think the boy had the cut of a parson, and he himself would have had it on his conscience if anything had gone wrong with Heddy's sermons. Sir Hedwick was a very orthodox, middle-aged squire, who was never absent from the family pew on a Sunday morning; and it had seemed to him even when he sounded his nephew on the point—with a view to a preliminary university course—that, in his own phraseology, it would be rather playing it low down on the parishioners of Sotherton to force upon them round-faced Heddy, whom they had known from a baby—and who had a great deal of the baby about him still—as their sole guide and counselor in matters spiritual.

Finally the difficulty was solved by Heddy's being taken into the works of a great railway company, of which Sir Hedwick was a director, with the prospect of becoming a civil engineer.

Heddy would have to rough it a bit, but what of that? His nephew was no milksop. On the contrary, he was as hard as nails; could be out all night after poachers, for instance, and turn up at breakfast as fresh in the gills as a sea-trout. As for the men he would have to associate with—well, he did not suppose they would be very choice companions, but Heddy could talk to anybody. He had heard Heddy's tongue wagging for hours on end, when he was sitting behind in the dogcart alongside of Giles or Harry; and whenever the boy had had a day at the rabbits with old John—though John was deaf and stupid—Heddy would be full of John's sayings and his own. As for holidays, Heddy would come to Sotherton as usual, of course. He would not get as long holidays as he had done at Winchester, naturally; but there would, Sir Hedwick supposed, be a month in the summer and a month at Christmas—eh? Oh, not so much as that? Anyhow, he would get what the others got, and he would find his own room always ready at the old place.

Heddy made no demur to anything.

A lodging was taken for him in a small street within easy walk of the works, and he was left there one bright winter day by his old friend the Sotherton butler, who did his best to cheer and encourage the boy.

"I think he'll be very comfortable, Sir Hedwick," Johnson reported subsequently. "Nice, clean little house it was. Little bit o' garden; not much, but kep' tidy. And I spoke about his meals bein' reg'lar, and his bein' used to his glass of beer at lunch—likewise at dinner. Didn't seem to think Master Heddy would be in at lunch, but would see he got it of an evenin'."

"And the people seemed decent and respectable, Johnson?" It was Johnson's mistress who now spoke; for Sir Hedwick had taken to himself a wife within the year; and the amiable young lady who now presided over his establishment was, or thought herself, quite as fond of his favorite nephew as he was himself. "The place was clean, I hope," added she, being strict in matters sanitary.

"Very clean, my lady—very nice altogether." And Johnson, who had been treated with deference such as his soul loved, and had partaken of the best the lodgings afforded, spoke up with warmth for his entertainers. After a troublesome railway journey undertaken in midwinter, the plain little domicile in the small, straight street, which chanced to be flooded with sunshine at the moment, had looked tempting enough; while it had been quite luxurious to find a brisk fire and a neat little meal laid out in a cozy parlor, and to be invited to smoke in an easy-chair, by Mrs. Bodkin's own hearth, thereafter. He had had all he required during the hour and a half spent at the lodgings, over and above the delightful sense of doing his duty by his master's family. He had had a pleasant jaunt altogether, and his sleek, rubicund countenance honestly expressed the serenity within his breast.

"And the boy, Johnson? Master Heddy, eh? Did he—hum—ha—seem pretty fair—pretty jolly—eh? Of course he knows it can't be all jam—he must look the thing in the face. I dare say it will be a bit of a grind at first—long hours, eh? and that sort of thing? But I—I hope he—ah—was pretty cheerful—made the best of a bad job? Hang it all, he didn't *break down*, did he, Johnson? Poor little chap! Somehow I hate to think of him all alone there in his beastly little lodging, eating his meals by himself," and Sir Hedwick turned away abruptly, and looked out of the window.

Johnson's reply, however, was reassuring.

"Oh, I think you need not be afraid, Sir Hedwick. I think Master Heddy will do very well, and be very comfortable. Oh, no, he didn't break down—not at all. He come with me to the

station, and says he, ' My love to them all, Johnson, and tell them I'm all right ; ' and I see him go off to the bookstall and buy a paper, as cool as if he had been in the place all his life. The hamper travelled very well, my lady." The speaker turned round as he was about to quit the room. " Me and Mrs. Bodkin, the landlady, opened it and took out the contents. I suppose we shall send another hamper by and by, my lady ? " Hampers had been despatched regularly to Winchester during Heddy's sojourn there.

" Certainly," replied Lady Sotherton, amiably. And then she remembered something else she had to say to Sir Hedwick ; and when any recollection of the young kinsman who had been thus launched on the sea of life floated across her brain from time to time, it was as of a light-hearted boy who had been started afresh at school, and whose new career had begun under very favorable auspices. Had she but known !

Do not, however, let me be misunderstood. It is, I am well aware, impossible for any youth resolved upon becoming a practical engineer to obtain the requisite knowledge and experience without passing through the ordeal of apprenticeship. To a boy who has chosen his own line in life, whose heart is in his work, whose mind is set on learning his business, and whose intention it is to learn from every source and through every channel, there is no hardship, comparatively speaking, in the usual five years thus spent. The drudgery, if drudgery it be, is congenial. Even the severance of social ties, which for the time being is almost inevitable—considering the hours necessarily kept and the strain made upon youthful energies—carries with it but little sense of loss to the enthusiastic apprentice, whose eyes are ever fixed upon the goal set before them by ambition and resolution.

Even the occasional dark days which fall to the lot of all are helped through by the force of the will ; and courage, when it fails, as fail it must now and again, comes back to the vigorous and hopeful aspirant.

But poor young Heddy Sotherton knew nothing of such enthusiasm, and had but a dim idea of success. Was it likely he should succeed ? He had never done anything at school. He had got his " removes " all right, it is true ; but so had all, or nearly all, his contemporaries. He had scraped along ; but no one had ever pretended that he had worked, or that, if he had worked, he would have brought any credit on his name thereby.

Sir Hedwick had always called him a lazy little beggar, and

looked quite pleased and affectionate, and as if lazy little beggars were the natural product of the Sotherton family, as he did so.

This had made Heddy's school life pleasant enough, but what about his new career?

He cared nothing about engineering, further than that it was more agreeable to him, as it always had been, to work with his hands than with his head, and he had a vague notion that head-work would not be required at the works. He had been great in casting bullets at the gun-room fire at Sotherton, and tinkering about with a hammer and tools had been rather a favorite amusement. When Sir Hedwick had first proposed that he should go to acquire the rudiments of practical engineering in a railway shed, and had assured him that he really should be fulfilling his duty as a young man who had his way to make, by flattening iron and driving in rivets, Heddy had jumped at the notion. Yes, he could do that sort of thing—rather. He would like it jolly well. He would not mind the fellows he would have to consort with—not he.

As to the hours, the getting up at five in the morning and being at his place by six—well, it would be rather 'a sweat'; but he had often got up, when Giles called him to go on his night-rounds, even earlier than that; and he supposed he should get used to it.

Anyhow, it would be better to work in a great open-air place with roaring furnaces, and plenty of coming and going and movement, than to be tethered to a high desk in a bank, or to a clerk's stool in chambers. He would like jolly well to be a civil engineer, and hoped his uncle would manage to get him into the works of the special railway company with whom Sir Hedwick had influence.

And now Heddy had been eight months in the works.

They had been eight such months as his poor, boyish, simple heart could never have previously imagined it possible to live through. He may be said to have been warned. But what did his uncle's warning amount to?

"It will be a bit rough on you at first, Heddy, you know. I am afraid you will feel just a bit strange and lonely, and all that; fellows do, you know." Sir Hedwick had patted his nephew kindly on the shoulder, and looked somewhat wistfully into his eyes. "It won't be quite like Sotherton, where everybody calls you by your name. But you will soon get over the first brush of it. You will pick up friends. There must be lots of youngsters knocking about, beginning life as you are doing, and learning to

stand on their own feet as you are learning; and you will soon run up against each other. I dare say some of your Winchester fellows—eh, what d'ye say? You know some who are? Of course you do—lots. They'll put you up to the ropes. And no doubt you'll get invited to their house for Saturdays and Sundays. It is a nuisance that we are too far off for you to come to us; and if I could think of anybody near you—but I don't know a soul. There's Lord Highburg, but——”

“Oh, no! I say, don't,” Heddy had blurted out, terrified at the idea of being thrust upon the notice of a formidable circle, of whom even Sir Hedwick himself was somewhat in awe. “Don't, for goodness' sake, say anything to one of them. I should be frightened to death. I should simply hate it.”

“So should I, Heddy, and that's flat. If there is a place on earth I detest visiting, it is Highburg's,” his uncle had rejoined placably. “I only thought you might find it handy,” he had mused after a reflective pause.

Find it handy! Find the magnificent county-seat of one of the largest landed proprietors in England “handy”!

The phrase gave Heddy Sotherton more than one bitter laugh during the long, slowly-dragging months which followed, when every other kind of laughter seemed as though it had fled from him for evermore; when hope and joy and happiness turned their backs and jeered at his misery; when no one came near him, no one sought him, no one wanted him; when night succeeded day and day gave place to night with sickening monotony; when the past—the free, merry-hearted past—seemed buried in its own grave: when even the present was but a dull dream; and when the careless kind word of a stranger would cause the involuntary start of anguish, as though a finger had been laid at random upon a throbbing nerve.

If Heddy had felt a boyish shyness of his uncle's friends while beneath his uncle's roof, what a yawning gulf was it which now intervened betwixt him and them!

He had begun by being sociable at the works. As Sir Hedwick said, his nephew could talk to anybody, and there had been no greater favorite at Sotherton than the Winchester school-boy. But the men at the works were different. They did not care to talk about their business; they wanted to discuss other topics—topics of no interest to a lad of nineteen; especially when looked at from the working-man's point of view. Of country life they knew nothing.

It was this utter absence of intercourse with his kind, this lack of sympathy, this silence, only broken by voices belonging to a different world—voices which had no right to interrogate, or reproach, or exhort—who were not *home* voices, and could never penetrate beneath the surface;—it was, in short, the fixed solitariness of Heddy Sotherton's new existence which stamped it as well-nigh intolerable.

Had he anything to look forward to, or hope for at the end of each week, all the rest might have been endured. Even the five or six lonely evenings might have been got through somehow, brightened by the light from beyond; but Saturday afternoon, which to all besides brought an ever-recurring release from toil, and a renewal of domestic intercourse or pleasure in some form, brought to this poor boy only a deeper heaviness of spirit. He had nowhere to go—nothing to do.

He was not exactly poor. Sir Hedwick had made him a sufficient allowance—but he did not know how to spend it. He had never been anywhere alone, and the idea of setting forth with his portmanteau and his hatbox on an expedition of his own planning had for him no attraction.

However, once he did call. With an effort he called upon a former schoolfellow, who had been popped into his father's counting-house, and whom Sir Hedwick had enjoined his nephew not to “drop.”

“May be useful to you, Heddy. I dare say his father has a nice house, and they will ask you to it, and take you somewhere on a Saturday night. Mind you look up Brown, and—ah!—Heddy—even though you didn't care particularly about him at Winchester, *make as much as you can of it, d'ye see?*” concluded the astute counselor, with a huge nudge in Heddy's ribs, and a sense of imparting a profound and almost wicked amount of worldly wisdom.

Brown was out when his old schoolfellow rang the bell—gone to the country from the Saturday to the Monday. Heddy left his name, and said he would call again, and the portly functionary who bowed him out forgot to mention the circumstance; so that it really was not Charlie Brown's fault that nothing was heard from him in response.

It might have been supposed that living, as Heddy Sotherton now did, in a suburb of the metropolis, he could hardly have been at a loss for some one with whom to pass a free afternoon; but although he mentally reviewed in succession the youths he



knew, or had once known on terms more or less intimate, he could not in his hour of need bethink him of one with whom he could be—himself. That need of being himself, of being able to speak, move, laugh, talk as he had been wont, was the sorest experienced by his aching heart. And the further back in his life was set the picture of his boyish self as he had erewhile been, the more remote seemed the prospect of his ever being the same again.

At long intervals he did indeed accept a friendly invitation. His old comrades were not wholly forgetful; but they found Heddy changed, and some of them fancied him sullen. They thought he did not like their people, nor their various modes of life. Perhaps he did not—altogether. Still, he would have been thankful, only too thankful, to have gone and gone again, had he been welcome.

Welcome, however, is rarely afforded to the unresponsive face.

Heddy could not all at once shake off the drawn look of somber reserve which had gradually settled down over his brow, nor readily accommodate the almost invariable seriousness of his mood to mirth.

At Easter, when there was the usual three days' holiday at the works, Heddy at first had had great hopes of Sotherton; but his uncle had written, making other arrangements for him. An event was expected at the old place; and though he was awfully sorry to say so, Sir Hedwick wrote, Heddy was to go to the house of a cousin, where he would have a good time among a set of nice young people.

The thought of being with a set of nice young people had been consoling to the lonely boy; and then it had turned out that Sir Hedwick, never very accurate, had mentally transformed a pack of noisy children into companions and associates for his nineteen-year-old nephew!

The Easter visit had been a failure, but Heddy never told his uncle so. He had made up his mind that, come what might, no syllable of complaint should cross his lips. It was clear to him that he was a difficulty, a stumbling-block in his parents' life; and that with their small means and their many children they must be only too thankful to accept the aid of the elder brother both for Heddy, and for the younger boys who were to be sent home to be educated the following year.

Sir Hedwick had avowed his intention of doing his part toward them, as he had done toward Heddy—in proportion. They

would be sent to less expensive schools; but they would be looked after, and the bills would be paid. Heddy, however, perfectly understood that he must be cleared out of the way before these younger ones came on. His uncle could not undertake to support the whole family; and since Sir Hedwick's marriage there was of course no relying upon the boys having the run of Sotherton, as Heddy had had during the bachelor *régime*. The boys must have a fair chance; and the more Heddy pondered and pondered over the matter, the more fully persuaded did he become in his own mind that, unless he wished to damage his young brothers' chances, he must hold his tongue about himself. Warm-hearted as Sir Hedwick was, he would naturally feel annoyance and a sense of irritation and failure if bluntly told that the arrangement he had considered such an excellent opening for his eldest nephew was become in that nephew's mind a nightmare of horror.

Sometimes, it is true, Heddy thought he would let slip something, some chance word which should put Sir Hedwick upon the right track, as by accident. If alone with his uncle he could do so, he thought; if they were talking together in their old rambling, familiar way—Sir Hedwick gripping him by the arm, and occasionally shaking his elbow to enforce a point—he fancied he might be able to lift the curtain for a moment.

Little did he guess that one sight of his own poor, pinched, wan young face would have been all the revelation any one needed.

"You do look as if you needed your holiday," the worthy Mrs. Bodkin would observe now and again, as the dusty, burning days of June and July went by, and still there was no change in Heddy's daily routine. "When be you thinking of taking your holiday now?" inquired she, with friendly familiarity and genuine interest.

"Not yet, Mrs. Bodkin, thank you. I don't quite know; I have not been told yet." And the boy's lip would almost imperceptibly quiver as he made what he considered a cheery reply, wishing he had not to make it so often, and that Mrs. Bodkin in her affectionate zeal would not look at him with a sigh as she turned away.

It almost came upon him as a shock when at last—at last!—he was sent for, one fresh, dewy morning in September, when the larks were rising in the blue sky, and the flower borders even in the tiny gardens around, were gay, and sprawling luxuriantly in

autumnal fashion—it came upon the young apprentice, we say, with something of a shock to be sent for to the manager's room, and informed that his turn had come, and that his fortnight's holiday would begin on the following Saturday, that day being Monday.

Heddy never knew how he got through the intervening time betwixt the moment when the solemn announcement was made, and that which found him back at his post at the other end of the place. His head seemed to go round as he left the manager's room, and he answered at random when spoken to, and used his tools mechanically for some hours thereafter.

But he was happy—oh, so happy! It was on this day that he was the happiest boy in the works, as was said above. In his pocket there lay a long, kind letter which had come that very morning from Sotherton, wherein his uncle had complained of the length of time Heddy had had to wait for his holiday, but had supposed it was all right, because, of course, Heddy must take his turn with the rest; and, being a youngster, doubtless his claims would be shoved aside to the last. He did hope, however, that Heddy would get down to Sotherton for the partridges. Not a field had yet been shot, because the season was late; but the corn was being carried the very day the letter was written, and they would have the stubble to tramp over immediately.

Heddy had put the document in his pocket with a quickened sense of his own wretchedness; but at the first opportunity which presented itself, after the turn Fortune's wheel had taken for him, he drew it forth and devoured every word.

He was to go; and something within his breast whispered that if he went he should never return.

He could not rid himself of the conviction. It might prove to be founded on sand, but still it was there; and it made him, as we have said, very happy. Had he gone on being where he was for years, probably no syllable would have escaped to betray his condition; but once face to face with Sir Hedwick, instinct whispered that, try as he might, he would simply be unable to hold his tongue.

“Mrs Bodkin, I'm off for my holiday on Saturday.”

He could have wished there were a dozen Mrs. Bodkins to be told the same thing. He told Mr. Bodkin, going out into the little garden on purpose. He told Mrs. Bodkin's cat, stroking pussy's gray coat and whispering the news in her ear; and it is pitiful to record that he had absolutely no one else to tell.

But Heddy had grown used to that. What he had not grown used to was the turning over of his possessions, and the joyful examination of coats and waistcoats, which was felt to be necessary, with a view to their usefulness as articles of apparel.

At this point a slight cloud arose on the horizon: he had grown an inch, and certain garments were too short for him. This mattered not at all by day, knickerbockers and rough stockings made all right in that respect, but could he present himself in Lady Sotherton's drawing-room at dinner-time showing his ankles? This was a grave consideration, and a visit to the tailor was resolved upon to be undertaken after hours on the following evening.

The tailor was reassuring, and could put the young gentleman straight in no time. Heddy informed him easily that he was going away, and could not go to a country-house with his dress suit in such a condition. He did not add that the dress suit had been lying by unworn during eight months; but the tailor guessed as much.

Then the young gentleman made a few purchases, and returned home radiant. Already he was looking upon every circumstance and surrounding with a new eye. Perhaps he was looking for the last time. At any rate he was going "home"; he was recalled from his bitter, bankrupt exile; he had endured without an audible groan the solitude, the chain—and now!

Saturday was a great day at Sotherton. The stubble was to be shot for the first time, and Sir Hedwick had assembled the right sort of party, and was confident of good sport.

The morning broke with an absolutely cloudless sky overhead, and a world of glittering dew and frosty cobwebs beneath.

"Jove! what a day we shall have!" cried the jolly host at breakfast time. "What a day for Heddy to have been with us! But he will be with us to-morrow, anyway."

At noon it was, "Jove! what sport! How Heddy would have enjoyed such sport! I wish the boy had been with us! But, anyway, he will be with us to-morrow."

The other guests took quite an interest in Heddy by this time. They saw that Sir Hedwick loved the boy, and that the very keepers were looking forward to his arrival.

"He has had a rough time of it, I expect," confided Heddy's uncle aside, to his nearest neighbor, setting down the cup out of which he had quaffed a long, deep draught. "We started him

at Christmas, and he has stuck to his guns like a man. Never had a day off. Jolly good pluck the boy has. And if he tells me now that he does not like the life—now that he has given it a fair trial—I'll listen to what he says. I'll take him away, if it's no good. He did not come mewling to me at the end of a week, or a month—not he. Not one word has he said all this time. So now, I am quite prepared to stand by him, whatever he decides upon." Then, pulling out his tobacco-pouch, "Somehow," murmured Sir Hedwick, thoughtfully, "I can't help thinking Heddy must have had rather a bad time."

By and by it was, "What train was the dogcart to meet, Jenkyns? *You* know."

"Ordered for six o'clock, Sir Hedwick. Train gets in at 6.30."

"You are sure it has been ordered?"

"Quite sure, Sir Hedwick. Heard the order delivered before we started."

"He'll be off by this time, then," rejoined Sir Hedwick, cheerfully. "He leaves King's Cross at two, sharp. Won't the poor old chap feel lively, eh, Bertram?" addressing a good-natured ear at hand. "I know what I used to feel on break-up days. Lord! what days those were! The maids knew about his room, didn't they, Jenkyns?"

Sir Hedwick had himself given orders about the room; but he had a trick of appealing to Jenkyns, and Jenkyns never misunderstood the appeal. He gravely assured Sir Hedwick he had heard Mrs. Bunch talking about Master Heddy's room, as he passed through the house.

At length the long bright day began to wane. It was rather soon to leave off shooting, some of the sportsmen thought, when between five and six o'clock their host took out his watch; but they said nothing, only looked at one another when the time was announced, and the return march begun. They saw that Sir Hedwick had something else on his mind.

"Heddy not arrived!" he exclaimed, eagerly, as the party turned in at the entrance porch, and were met by Lady Sotherton, smiling a welcome. "Heddy not here yet? Oh, well, the train's late, I suppose. He'll turn up presently. He—oh, you want me, do you? One moment," to his guests, "they will bring you what you want, but Lady Sotherton wants me for a moment. Well, my dear," having followed his wife into a side room. "What is it? Nothing the matter, eh? Baby all right, I suppose?"

"Oh, dear, yes; quite right, little darling. Nurse has her out on the terrace. I have just left them. Oh, it is nothing—nothing at all—only I thought I would tell you what I had done, though I am afraid it will be a little disappointment to you and to Heddy. But really I felt it was my duty. You know, Hedwick, the papers do give such *dreadful* accounts, and scarlet-fever is such a *dreadful* thing——"

Sir Hedwick stopped short as though struck by a bolt.

"Scarlet-fever!" he exclaimed. "What—what do you mean? Has Heddy——" the next words stuck in his throat.

"Oh, *no*; oh, I am so sorry I alarmed you;" the young wife patted her husband's shoulder with instant compunction. "There is really nothing to be alarmed about. Only, you know, I felt that with darling baby so young, and at such a very susceptible age, we really ought to be careful; so I—I—" in spite of herself she experienced a slight nervousness as she proceeded, "I telegraphed to Heddy to put him off for a few days—at least, for a little while—just till this terrible epidemic in London has abated——"

"You did *what*?" shouted Sir Hedwick, dropping the butt-end of his gun with a bang on the floor. "Put him off! Put off Heddy for that—that *rot*! Good Heavens! what——"

"It was no 'rot,'" responded Lady Sotherton, somewhat stiffly. "It was all in the paper this morning. And, indeed, I have been reading about it, and trembling, every day for some time past. But I did not like to disturb you; and I knew you would not believe it; men never do. But I asked Dr. Jones," eagerly, "and *he* said——"

"Said anything you told him, the old fool!" exclaimed her husband. "And you put poor Heddy off—and he's been looking forward to it—and I too——"

"Only for a little while; he can come next week, I am sure, or—very soon after. He is too good a boy to mind a little disappointment."

Sir Hedwick looked the speaker in the face.

"Gad, madam," he said, slowly, "I hope neither you nor I may ever know the meaning of such a little disappointment."

Then he turned his back upon her and walked away.

"I am so glad I did it before he knew," was Lady Sotherton's self-congratulation, perceiving how her patience and foresight had met with its fitting reward.

At dinner Sir Hedwick scarcely spoke.

The next day was Sunday. By Sunday morning he had partially recovered. He had made it up with his wife, and he had thought of a plan for Heddy.

"It is a nuisance there being no post on Sundays," he observed to his principal guest and ally, "but I will send that poor nephew of mine a check to-morrow, to take him off somewhere to get disinfected—as her ladyship is in a fuss about it—and we'll have him here by the end of the week. I shall write to the manager of the works, too, and get his leave extended, as a personal favor. I can put it all straight, but still I wish it had not happened. The whole thing's arrant rubbish. Women are regularly crazed when their babies are concerned."

Monday morning broke, and, busy as he was, Sir Hedwick did not forget to send the check and the few words of regret, affection, and encouragement which would have been all Heddy-wanted, had they not been—too late.

"I declare I just can't bear to look at him," whimpered Mrs. Bodkin, with her apron at her eyes, on the same Monday morning. "To see him sitting there, a touchin' nothing, and as though he was turned to stone in the chair where he sits. And I do believe, Bodkin, I heard him sobbin' in the night. Sure as death I did, for I sat up and listened. And his eyes is all red and swelled. And when he tries to smile at me, and say it ain't for long—oh, Lord! oh, Lord!" and the kindly soul melted into tears herself.

Bodkin shook his head in sympathy.

"It's a cruel shame," he said, and being a silent man, had no more to say.

"And all them things of his packed and ready, and he can't abear to take them out!" proceeded she, wiping her eyes. "Poor lad! poor lad! Says he this mornin', 'It ain't no use goin' to the works;' for he has got his holiday for this time, and they won't change it for no other; and he don't care to move, for he hasn't thought of nowhere else to go; and so he just sits and sits. It's my belief he'll be took bad if he goes on as he is doing."

"He went out yesterday, didn't he?"

"To that young Morris—yes. Well, he couldn't help hisself. Morris, he came. I don't think nothing of Morris, but he meant it kindly, and I don't think, Bodkin, that the poor lamb had the strength to resist. So he just went with him—but lor! what

good did it do? A nasty little house pack full of children, and nothin' nice. He came back soon enough. And I think he's looked worse than before. Well," with a long sigh, "I'll go in and see if I can arouse him. But drat them grand relations that can treat a poor lone lad like that!" concluded the worthy dame, indignantly, as she faced the ordeal before her.

"No, thank you, Mrs. Bodkin," said Heddy's voice the minute after. "I really don't want anything. I'll go out—presently. I feel rather sleepy this morning. Last night, somehow, I did not sleep much. I have been a little put out in my arrangements, you see."

"And it's been a disappointment, I'm sure," cried the good landlady, sympathetically. "Lor, sir, we've all our disappointments. Now just you cheer up, and——"

"Oh, yes; it is nothing. A little disappointment. I——" and suddenly the room swam round before his eyes, a roar of thunder sounded in his ears, and the floor struck him a sharp blow on the temple. He knew no more.

All that money and skill could do was bestowed on Heddy Sotherton now. Not all Lady Sotherton's entreaties could hinder Sir Hedwick from setting off then and there to the sick-bed of the poor, neglected boy; and not all Mrs. Bodkin's well-meant volubility could prevent his brushing her from his path and flinging himself straight into the sick-chamber.

He had been informed that his nephew was suffering from a sudden failure of the heart's action, the result, probably, of some shock to the system supervening upon a period of low health.

But one look at Heddy's face made Sir Hedwick throw up his arms, and fall down across the bed.

Heddy opened his eyes, and the light of consciousness lit them up, as they beheld the prostrate form.

"Uncle Hedwick?" he murmured, reaching out a thin hand. Then followed a pause, and a few short, quick breaths. "I am at Sotherton—at last!" he cried, and the longing of his soul satisfied, the spirit released itself with a smile.

But at Sotherton no one ever mentions Heddy's name. Everything with which his memory is associated has been carefully removed out of sight. And those who know are careful to warn strangers never to allude to any subject which can bring up before Sir Hedwick the image of the poor boy whose heart broke because he had "a little disappointment."



## NEVER LIE \*

BY HANS ARNOLD



ES, it is a very peculiar thing about this social lie," said Mrs. Judge Zellner, around whose tea-table there was assembled to-day, as there was every Thursday, the usual small circle of friends. "I, for my own part, maintain that one can go through life very well without coming under the rule of its sceptre—I have most relentlessly declared war against it! I *never* lie!"

Dr. Naumann, who sat opposite the charming hostess, drew his face into an exclamation point. "'Pon honor, Madam," said he good humoredly, have you never greeted an, at least, uninteresting, if not absolutely unwelcome guest, with,—'I am very glad to see you,' never remarked to a tiresome visitor when *at last* rising to leave, 'Oh, must you go *so soon*?'"

The hostess seemed to have just dropped a stitch in her knitting, at least she gazed down upon it so intently and earnestly that it seemed as if she had neither eye nor ear for anything else.

"And have you never," continued the inexorable doctor, "after having heroically, and with scarcely suppressed yawning, endured an interminable evening's entertainment, thanked the hostess on leaving for the 'pleasant', or, in aggravated cases, for the 'inspiring' evening?"

The lady of the house had in the meantime, recovered herself.

"Yes, those are exceptions," she said, with dignity, "these conventional forms of society are accepted by every one at their market value—those are not *lies*."

"And we could not really get along without them," remarked Miss Dusendorf. "Think of the state of things which would necessarily arise if each unwished-for visitor were to be met with the exclamation: 'How provoking, that you should come again so soon!' Then, too, you could not by any possibility,

\* Translated from the German, for Short Stories, by Emma Jacobson.  
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after feasting on venison at your dear neighbor's, grasp his hand and say: 'Really, now, I have not spent such a wretched evening for years.'

"The best antidote against social lying has been received by me," said Mrs. Professor Schwartz, a woman still strikingly handsome and vivacious. "I was once so thoroughly caught in its meshes that for a whole week after I sent word to visitors that 'Madam — will regret extremely she is not at home,' *only* when it could not possibly be done otherwise."

"That must indeed have been a radical moral cure," murmured the doctor. "Will you not, for the edification of lying humanity, divulge your experience, measurably as a danger-signal on the thin ice of social veracity?"

"Why not?" said the Professor's wife. "I will even assume that all subsequent exclamations of approval: 'How nice,' 'How interesting,' etc., are honestly meant—just to insure the moral effect of my story. To proceed:

"We had been married about half a year. My husband had accepted a call as assistant professor at B——, and labored with uninterrupted zeal upon a comprehensive scientific work, which, we hoped and wished, would sooner or later obtain for him the position of principal. This occupied him to the exclusion of everything else. I had been brought up in the country, had never known much of what is called 'pleasure,' and took it as a matter of course that my life should continue as quiet and with as little variety as previously. Then, too, I was married very young, and housekeeping had not yet lost the charm of newness; besides, I was helped out by a little pardonable pride in my learned husband, who had no time to spare from his work for idle frivolities.

"In short, I had nearly forgotten that I was nineteen years of age. If ever my feet became uneasy when a pretty waltz or lively gallop was played by the military band in our vicinity, I regarded that as a surviving remnant of youthful folly, which I, in my position as Professor's wife, could not too soon get rid of.

"In this commendable and highly satisfactory frame of mind the first year of our married life had passed away, and it would probably have continued on in this way had not a variation in the outer circumstances of our lives brought about a change in me.

"A brother of my husband, also recently married, and as pleasure-loving and worldly as my good husband was quiet, pre-

occupied and reserved, was transferred by the government as revenue officer to B——, and, as was natural, the most intimate and agreeable intercourse was established between the two houses.

“ My sister-in-law, Anna, an officer’s daughter, handsome, elegant, and of a lively temperament, soon obtained an insight into our mode of life. Within the first week of our intimacy she had forced upon me a bang and a new bonnet—though without my good husband either seeing or commenting upon it, much to my chagrin—and took advantage of every opportunity to assure us that it was a crying shame that we should bury ourselves behind folios and tobacco smoke, that I was obliged to live like a nun—with nineteen years one wished to see people and be seen.

“ My good husband, however, declined every invitation to take part in social gayeties, first jocularly, but later with such emphasis that I became alarmed and gave my sister-in-law a hint to drop the subject. ‘ It is all right as it is,’ I added, with a little sigh.

“ However, the inflammable material must have been in my soul; the first spark had fallen into it, and while the flame of rebellion had not yet blazed forth openly, yet it was already secretly smouldering.

“ One morning—it was an abominably rainy and disagreeable day—I had gone to the market very early and had attended to various matters. As one usually does on a rainy day, I had donned my oldest clothes, wore large storm rubbers, lined woollen mittens and a winter cloak, used by me at the time of my confirmation, and which I had in the meantime considerably outgrown.

“ At a street corner I encountered my sister-in-law who, with a servant following her carrying a number of packages, seemed also to have made some purchases. She hastened up to me.

“ ‘ Eliza, do me the favor and go with me to the florist’s. The invitation has just arrived from the Governor to his great ball, and I must give one more order. Of course you, too, no doubt, received your invitation at the same time we did?’

“ I shrugged my shoulders. ‘ We?’ I said somewhat bitterly, ‘ what are you thinking of, Anna?’

“ ‘ Robert does not intend to make a single visit this winter—not even to his colleagues—he is up to his ears in his “ Forfeiture Rights!”’

“‘Forfeiture Rights!’ cried my sister-in-law, indignantly. ‘You let him carry on his Forfeiture Rights and you assert your household rights! You will see the time—don’t be angry, Eliza—when you will have trained your husband to be a perfect egotist, who will carry off the premium at the next exhibition for that sort of thing. Then you will have something that is *right*.’

“I became thoughtful—there was something in it!

“‘You don’t mean to tell me that you would not *like* to go?’ continued Anna in her indignation, ‘if so, say so—and I will give you up!’

“‘No,’ said I, frankly, ‘I would be very glad to go,—extremely glad. But I cannot carry it through! How can I induce Robert to make a formal call upon the Governor. You do not know him, Anna.’

“My sister-in-law gazed meditatively on the ground for a moment, then she raised her head.

“‘Eliza, have you courage?’ asked she.

“I hesitated. ‘I’m not sure of it,’ said I.

“‘Well, at least I have—in an emergency, enough for both,’ she exclaimed in a determined manner. ‘I have made a plan and you will help me to carry it out. Have you visiting-cards with you?’

“I drew forth my reticule, ‘Yes,’ said I in astonishment, ‘for myself and Robert.’

“‘Excellent,’ exclaimed my sister-in-law with satisfaction, and beckoned to a passing cab. ‘Now forward with good cheer.’ And before I could realize what was taking place, we were both in the vehicle, the servant on the box.

“‘But Anna, but Anna!’ I cried. ‘Do listen! What are you going to do? I certainly cannot go to the Governor’s in this costume, and besides, without Robert.’

“‘You’re not going to, either!’ retorted my sister-in-law with the greatest equanimity.

“‘We stop at the door—send up your and your husband’s cards—the Governor’s lady does not receive any one, and a week from to-day you and I will be tripping the light fantastic in pale pink silk and wild roses at the gubernatorial mansion, and Robert will write three pages less of “Forfeiture Rights,” which will be healthy for him—and posterity will be none the worse for it, so far as I can judge.’

“I was so dumfounded over this bold plan and still bolder

execution, that I sat silently and wrung my hands, not to the improvement of my woollen mittens, one of which resented this rough treatment and split up the back, not improving in elegance of appearance on this account. Every objection I could have made, or perhaps should have made—was silenced before the force of existing facts, for the cab halted in front of the palatial mansion in which the newly appointed Governor had recently taken up his residence, and where he intended to make his *entrée* into society with a grand entertainment.

“The servant took the cards handed him, without betraying the slightest astonishment over the fact that the Professor whom he was to announce was nowhere visible, and disappeared in the vestibule of the house. My sister-in-law embraced me jubilantly. ‘Good!’ cried she, and laughed gayly. ‘Robert is just now making his courtesy before Her Excellency, and we will overwhelm him with the accomplished deed and the tailor’s bill.’

“Now that there was no longer any help for it I, too, had become quite gay. The servant came back, and we were about to give the signal for the driver to go on, when John, with his hat in his hand, stepped up and opened the cab door. ‘Her Excellency desires the pleasure,’ said he, with solemnity.

“Anna and I stared at each other for a moment in speechless terror—I grasped her hand convulsively. ‘Anna!’ I whispered faintly. My sister-in-law looked about her as if for help; evidently she, too, was very much disturbed.

“‘Give me your gloves, at any rate,’ cried I, in agony, and tore my tattered mittens from my hands.

“The servant had meanwhile stood motionless, like a stuffed diplomat, on the curb and awaited the things that were to come.

“Suddenly Anna seemed to have come to a decision. ‘Go up again immediately,’ commanded she, with great dignity, ‘and say we beg a thousand pardons—madam, the Professor’s wife, has suddenly become ill and it would be impossible for her at the present moment to leave the carriage.’

“The servant, whose hitherto impenetrable mask now betrayed the slightest possible inclination to grin, bowed and disappeared for the second time. In the same instant Anna called to the driver, ‘Go on!’

“But the miscreant had discovered some flaw in the arrangement of his bridle and with a laconic ‘In a minute’ crept down from his box and buckled around on the horse with exasperating equanimity and conscientiousness.

"We sat there trembling with impatience and fear—to go away on foot was of course out of the question. Now—now he was ready, and seemed about to resume his seat.

"There—oh, horrors!—the house door opened and a small, good-natured looking lady with a heavy fur cloak thrown over her shoulders hastily approached our cab accompanied by our servant—Her Excellency in person!

"Anna, who grasped and mastered the situation with lightning rapidity, whispered to me: 'I am you, and you are my maid!' and sank into the corner of the cab, her handkerchief before her eyes, while I, rejoicing in view of my inelegant costume that so subordinate a rôle was assigned to me, busied myself in endeavoring to revive her with an imaginary smelling-bottle.

"Her Excellency, whose reputation for great good nature and feminine curiosity was well known, meanwhile had beckoned to the servant, who was writhing with laughter behind her back in a very disrespectful manner, as I saw with much disgust. In the most affable manner she requested my sister-in-law, whom she took to be myself, to step out of the cab.

"'No, my dear Mrs.——,' she said with a really genuine kind-heartedness, which we would no doubt have appreciated much more under any other circumstances, 'I certainly cannot let you drive on in this condition—you must come up with me until you recover—where is your husband?'

"My knees shook—it was getting more and more interesting.

"'My husband has gone to the drugstore to get me some drops, such as I always take when I have an attack of this kind,' gasped Anna with a dying voice, 'my maid has remained with me on that account.'

"'Well, then, he must be back soon,' said Her Excellency, 'the maid,'—to my inner indignation the noble lady accepted that fiction without the slightest question—'will remain in the carriage and notify your husband—no, no trouble at all, my dear Mrs.——, I will give you a glass of wine—I will not let you go.'

"All compliments and protests were of no avail. Anna was obliged to leave the vehicle, and staggered up the stairs in the most deadly embarrassment and the best of health, supported on either side by the grinning servant and her kind Excellency. Fortunately, she did not look back—for in spite of the distressing situation, I would have had to laugh, even under penalty of death.

"But when the unique procession had disappeared in the house,

my position began to weigh upon my mind. I was waiting for the 'husband,' and if he was not conveyed hence by some spiritualistic means, there was no apparent reason why a year from to-day I should not still be sitting here in the cab, provided horse and driver did not in the meantime give out.

"Therefore, *do* something I must, that was clear, and necessity in this case was the mother of invention—the husband must be supplied.

"I gave the driver our street and house number, and besought him, with promise of a princely fee, to drive as fast as his horse was able to go—and away we went for the second time on this memorable day.

"How I got up the steps and into our house I cannot tell to this day. I pulled the bell so that it resounded throughout the entire house, rushed into the hall and burst into the study, which otherwise at this time had to be avoided like Bluebeard's chamber, left the door standing wide open, in violation of all domestic rules and regulations, and cried: 'Robert—your dress-coat, your silk hat, your gloves—quick, our whole existence is at stake!' Robert stared at me with wide-opened eyes. Torn from the calm atmosphere of his 'Forfeiture Rights' into the whirlwind of events, he was, fortunately, so dazed that he allowed me to stuff him into his dress-coat as if he were a doll. He assured me afterwards that he had the sensation of being overtaken by a cyclone which seized and shook him—but as I did not give him an opportunity to say a word, only calling incessantly 'Quick, quick!' he followed me as dumb as a lamb to slaughter, like a lamb with silk hat and light gloves.

"Arrived at the door, I paused a moment. 'The drops'! cried I,—flew back to my husband's writing-desk, seized the first bottle I could lay my hands on—a crime which under normal conditions I could never have been guilty of, and stormed after my husband, who had remained standing on the steps gazing helplessly at me.

"'Eliza, if I may allow myself *one* humble question—where am I to go?'

"'Into the cab,' replied I with the last remnant of my breath—and not till we had driven about two blocks had I recovered so far that I could explain the circumstances to him in a few broken words and make it clear to him that, for the space of ten minutes, he must, *nolens volens*, be Anna's solicitous husband and sympathize with and support her in her nervous attack.

“Robert was too much puzzled and confused to reproach me with our fantastic performance. During the entire ride he only opened his mouth three times, and that only to say with head-shaking and as if soliloquizing ‘Remarkable,’ which under the circumstances could only be a relief to me.

“Without looking at each other, we ascended the steps of the Governor’s mansion; on every third step I said to my absent-minded husband: ‘I am the maid of your wife!’ which communication he received with a pleasant ‘Indeed?’ Whether or not he would draw the necessary conclusions therefrom, I had to await and see. Suddenly a thought struck me. I stood still.

“‘Robert!’ I gasped in fear, ‘Is red ink poison?’

“Robert looked at me distrustfully. The thought, whether or not everything was quite right in the upper story with me, which, as he afterwards confessed, had several times occurred to him on this morning, seemed by this question to have become more tenable.

“‘No,’ said he, softly, ‘have you perhaps partaken of some?’

“I shook my head and pressed onward—the small bottle which in my haste I had snatched up and taken with me, contained the above-mentioned fluid, and this must represent the nerve-quieting drops.

“As we were ushered into the drawing-rooms of Her Excellency, I, as maid, meekly following in the footsteps of my master, poor Anna was still lying languidly in the corner of the sofa. Surrounding her like a still-life picture were grouped smelling-bottles, a glass of Cape wine, a fan and a box of Seidlitz powders; Her Excellency stood by with sympathetic mien.

“Upon our entrance a look of merriment which, in spite of all exertion, could not be repressed, flashed over Anna’s face. It might, however, have been interpreted as a convulsive start. ‘Now, my dear Professor,’ exclaimed Her Excellency, again all condescension and kindness, ‘have you come with the long-wished-for drops?’

“Robert looked about him wildly. ‘Drops?’ he repeated, gaspingly. ‘Here, sir,’ I interrupted him quickly; ‘I have the bottle!’

“Her Excellency, with a silver, escutcheon-crowned spoon in her hand, seemed determined to carry out her rôle of Good Samaritan, and on the principle that ‘much helps much,’ she poured out a generous portion, which she was about to bring to



Anna's mouth with a comforting, 'There—that will help you.' But Anna weakly motioned it away. 'Only ten drops!' she whispered. With a respectful 'Excellency will permit me,' I undertook the measuring of the drops so that the exalted lady might not discover the label, 'Red Ink,' which, fortunately, at first glance had escaped her.

"These ten drops, however, which I measured off as sparingly as possible, had to be swallowed. They produced a perfectly miraculous effect, for Anna immediately rose to her feet, profusely thanked her hostess, and was assured by Her Excellency that she would be very happy to see her patient wholly recovered and in good spirits at her ball. 'For we certainly may expect to see you here?' she added, turning to Robert, who looked daggers at me and murmured something inaudibly. He told me later that he had said, 'The devil!' which, however, on account of the greater probability was received as 'With pleasure.' Amid ever renewed thanks and compliments we then withdrew, and when we were again seated in our cab, the driver of which certainly had the most profitable part of the business, Anna and I began to laugh as we never laughed before or after, as unceasingly as one only laughs when excited nerves contribute their share, and that was the case here.

"My poor husband in the meantime sat on the rear seat in his dress-coat and silk hat and gazed alternately at wife and sister-in-law. I believe he would like to have preached a little, but we neither gave him opportunity to get in a word, nor ourselves to get breath.

"When one of us had just dried her last laughter-tears, then the other would only need to look at her, or to say 'The Drops' and it began anew. The cab-driver, who no doubt had already wondered what the peculiar circumstances were surrounding us, looked around at us every few minutes with a merry countenance—such passengers certainly did not often fall to his lot.

"'And now to our house!' said Anna, at length. 'You will take lunch with us to-day—in the first place, we must not close this day in any commonplace manner, and then, too, I have too great a fear on your account, Eliza—your Bluebeard will eat you up entirely, if you remain alone with him now!'

"We laughed anew. My husband, who meekly ventured to utter 'Forfeiture Rights,' was overruled, and in the best of humor we drove to Anna's home.

"My brother-in-law, who was quite as genial as his wife,

brought out champagne to properly solemnize the occasion of Robert's first State visit, and Robert himself became quite hilarious and gave a general pardon, especially since my, or rather Anna's, heinous offense had already been expiated by a corresponding degree of anxiety and fear.

"This lunch then might have and should have closed this story of our mendacity—but we did not get off so easily. When we had measurably calmed down and discussed the matter over our coffee, my brother-in-law, Rudolph, who was leaning back in his rocking-chair, suddenly said very seriously: 'But, children, what do you think will be the further course of this matter?'

"'What do you mean?' asked Robert, and Anna and I suddenly paused—the question surprised us.

"'I mean *this*,' replied Rudolph, and slightly raised himself from his comfortable position, 'that I find the whole joke very harmless and amusing and that it might have been first-rate if the outcome would only have the kindness to be according to programme—'

"'But?' his wife interrupted him breathlessly.

"'But—since that has *not* been the case, in my judgment there remains nothing for us to do but for all of us to remain away from the ball, under the most plausible excuse possible. Otherwise the affair might have an exceedingly foolish after-play, which to my mind is not at all pleasant to contemplate.'

"'I do not understand you,' cried Anna, impatiently, 'give us facts or keep still!'

"'Very well,' said Rudolph, 'facts then let it be. Her Excellency without delay, as is to be expected of Excellencies, will return the call, which will be made with more skill than was the case with yours; the day after comes the invitation for Professor—so far everything is lovely. But now further!'

"'Quick! Quick!' I cried, feverishly.

"'All in good time,' said Rudolph imperturbably, 'we go to the ball—'

"'Correct!' said Anna.

"'We enter and are greeted by Her Excellency, all dove-gray silks and graciousness. We smile and make our obeisance—she with the trained faculty of high-stationed persons for remembering faces, sees the suffering Professor's wife of this morning, radiant and rosy, come waltzing up with a revenue officer, and soon thereafter beholds the staid Professor tripping in with his maid leaning on his arm—an explanation will be inevitable!'

"'Well, where is the harm?' interrupted his wife, though

with less assurance than before. 'Her Excellency appears so kind a woman that, without doubt, *if* an explanation is necessary, she will think the matter very amusing.'

" 'I regret not being able to share your view of the case,' said Rudolph. 'In the first place, people in the position of the Governor, who have to receive some five hundred persons, do not care to converse longer than necessary with every one of their dear guests. Then, also, Her Excellency may be an angel, a soul, what you will—but that is not contagious, and *His* Excellency is said not always to be so. Now take into account that he is my superior in office, add together the whole story and deduce the result! I have spoken!' He leaned back in his rocking-chair and smoked on.

" 'We two culprits looked at each other as if thunderstruck. 'No doubt you are right,' said Anna, faintly.

" 'There you have it,' exclaimed Robert, 'and now, wifey, come home! I must make up for lost time in my work, and you have not been home since ten o'clock this morning.' These words, spoken in a slightly raised tone, reminded me of my shamefully neglected duties—Anna and I parted sadly, and only Robert triumphed because the old saying, 'He who digs a trench for others will himself fall in,' had been so thoroughly vindicated in our case.

" 'The next day as we were sitting at our second breakfast, there were handed to us the invitations to the ball, at the same time also a letter with a blazing coat-of-arms. Apprehensively, I opened the envelope to be truly mortified, for her kind Excellency inquired in the most sympathetic manner in regard to my health, and begged that word might be sent her by the servant in regard to the condition of the patient. I sat there dumb and penitent with the letter in my hand. To reply to this friendliness with another lie, seemed to me too preposterous. I ordered the messenger to say that I would send word later, and as Robert could offer no advice went to Anna's house in order that I might communicate the state of things to her and come to a conclusion. Anna and her husband were both at home and with the laconic word 'read' I gave them the missive of the Governor's wife. They read it through in breathless suspense.

" 'Well,' said Anna and dropped the letter into her lap, 'if that woman hasn't wings, it is a mistake of Nature—she has missed her calling as an angel.'

“ ‘Yes, I think so, too,’ said I with all my heart.

“ ‘But what are we to do now? Shall we out of gratitude lie once more? That is impossible for me! We will never get out of this difficulty—it is enough to make me despair!’

“We all three sat silent and thoughtful, finally Anna broke the silence. ‘Oh, well,’ said she, resolutely, ‘we must cut the Gordian Knot—we must put an end to the matter or we will never have peace. Eliza, you and I will drive for the second time to the Governor’s house, this time with the distinct desire that Her Excellency may be at home and humbly and penitently confess our deception from beginning to end—that is the only way out of it!’ Rudolph looked a little anxious, for the ‘superior’ still lingered in his mind.

“ ‘Well, Rudolph, shall we?’ I asked, hesitatingly.

“Then he looked up and laughed. ‘So far as I am concerned you may,’ said he, ‘but make it very simple and natural—she will not be unforgiving, I presume. Her Excellency must have been young some time.’

“And so it was done. After having experienced on the way in tenfold intensity the sensations one has when sitting in the waiting-room of a dentist in the possession of an irretrievable molar, the matter was finally adjusted quite satisfactorily—much better than we had deserved.

“The Governor’s wife was too kind-hearted not to have pity on our deadly embarrassment and met us half-way in our explanation. We finally found ourselves pleasantly conversing in regard to all the charitable undertakings in the city of which she was the active and enthusiastic leader, and we parted from her with a feeling of gratitude for a delicacy and regard for our feelings which was all the more beautiful because it was unexpected.

“Morally, now, our husbands ought not to have allowed us to go to the ball, but sensibly they did it, and we enjoyed ourselves hugely and danced till early morning, and when an acquaintance of ours, who had seen the somewhat meaning smile on the face of Her Excellency on her greeting us, said quite reverently: ‘Her Excellency really was *very* gracious to you!’ My sister-in-law said with great dignity: ‘We have had a previous acquaintance!’”

“ ‘Aha!’ said the lady.”



BY ALPHONSE DAUDET

*Famous Story Series*



WE were going up the Champs Elysées with Doctor V——, gathering the history of besieged Paris, from the walls pierced by shell, the pavement plowed by grapeshot, when just before reaching the Place de l'Étoile, the doctor stopped and pointed out to me one of those large corner houses so pompously grouped around the Arc de Triomphe.

“Do you see,” said he, “those four closed windows on the balcony up there? In the beginning of August, that terrible month of August of '70, so laden with storm and disaster, I was summoned there to attend a case of apoplexy. The sufferer was Colonel Jouve, an old Cuirassier of the First Empire, full of enthusiasm for glory and patriotism, who, at the commencement of the war, had taken an apartment (with a balcony) in the Champs Elysées—for what do you think? To assist at the triumphal entry of our troops! Poor old man! The news of Wissembourg arrived as he was rising from table. On reading the name of Napoleon at the foot of that bulletin of defeat he fell senseless!

“I found the old Cuirassier stretched upon the floor, his face bleeding and inert as from the blow of a club. Standing, he would have been very tall, lying he looked immense; with fine features, beautiful teeth, and white curling hair, carrying his eighty years as though they had been sixty. Beside him knelt his granddaughter in tears. She resembled him. Seeing them side by side they reminded me of two Greek medallions stamped with the same impress, only the one was antique, earth-stained, its

outlines somewhat worn; the other beautiful and clear, in all the lustre of freshness.

"The child's sorrow touched me. Daughter and granddaughter of soldiers, for her father was on MacMahon's staff, the sight of this old man stretched before her evoked in her mind another vision no less terrible. I did my best to reassure her, though, in reality, I had but little hope. We had to contend with hemoptysis, from which at eighty there is small chance of recovery.

"For three days the patient remained in the same condition of immobility and stupor. Meanwhile came the news of Reichshofen—you remember how strangely? Till the evening we all believed in a great victory—20,000 Prussians killed, the Crown Prince prisoner.

"I cannot tell by what miracle, by what magnetic current, an echo of this national joy can have reached our poor invalid, hitherto deaf to all around him; but that evening, on approaching the bed, I found a new man. His eye was almost clear, his speech less difficult, and he had the strength to smile and to stammer:

"'Victory, victory!'

"'Yes, Colonel, a great victory.' And as I gave the details of MacMahon's splendid success, I saw his features relax and his countenance brighten.

"When I went out his granddaughter was waiting for me, pale and sobbing.

"'But he is saved,' said I, taking her hands.

"The poor child had hardly courage to answer me. The true Reichshofen had just been announced, MacMahon a fugitive, the whole army crushed. We looked at each other in consternation: she, anxious at the thought of her father, I, trembling for the grandfather. Certainly he would not bear this new shock. And yet what could we do? Let him enjoy the illusion which had revived him? But then we should have to deceive him.

"'Well, then, I will deceive him!' said the brave girl, and, hastily wiping away her tears, she re-entered her grandfather's room with a beaming face.

"It was a hard task she had set herself. For the first few days it was comparatively easy, as the old man's head was weak and he was as credulous as a child. But with returning health came clearer ideas. It was necessary to keep him *au courant* with the movements of the army and to invent military bulletins.

It was pitiful to see that beautiful girl bending night and day over her map of Germany, marking it with little flags, forcing herself to combine the whole of a glorious campaign—Bazaine on the road to Berlin! Frossard in Bavaria! MacMahon on the Baltic! In all this she asked my counsel, and I helped her as far as I could, but it was the grandfather who did the most for us in this imaginary invasion. He had conquered Germany so often during the First Empire! He knew all the moves beforehand: 'Now they should go there. This is what they will do;' and his anticipations were always realized, not a little to his pride. Unfortunately, we might take towns and gain battles, but we never went fast enough for the Colonel. He was insatiable. Every day I was greeted with a fresh feat of arms:

"'Doctor, we have taken Mayence,' said the young girl, coming to meet me with a heartrending smile, and through the door I heard a joyous voice crying:

"'We are getting on, we are getting on! In a week we shall enter Berlin!'

"At that moment the Prussians were but a week from Paris. At first we thought it might be better to move to the provinces, but once out of doors, the state of the country would have told him all, and I thought him still too weak, too enervated, to know the truth. It was therefore decided that they should stay where they were.

"On the first day of the investment I went to see my patient—much agitated, I remember, and with that pang in my heart which we all felt at knowing that the gates of Paris were shut, that the war was under our walls, that our suburbs had become our frontiers.

"I found the old man jubilant and proud.

"'Well,' said he, 'the siege has begun!'

"I looked at him stupefied.

"'How, Colonel, do you know?'

"His granddaughter turned to me, 'Oh, yes, Doctor, it is great news. The siege of Berlin has commenced.'

"She said this composedly, while drawing out her needle. How could he suspect anything? He could not hear the cannon nor see that unhappy Paris, so sullen and disorderly. All that he saw from his bed was calculated to keep up this delusion. Outside was the Arc de Triomphe, and in the room quite a collection of souvenirs of the First Empire. Portraits of marshals, engravings of battles, the King of Rome in his baby-ropes; the

stiff consoles, ornamented with trophies in brass, were covered with Imperial relics, medals, bronzes; a stone from St. Helena under a glass shade; miniatures, all representing the same becurled lady, in ball-dress, in a yellow gown with leg-of-mutton sleeves and light eyes; and all—the consoles, the King of Rome, the medals, the yellow ladies with short waists and sashes under their arms in that style of awkward stiffness which was the grace of 1806. Good Colonel! it was this atmosphere of victory and conquest, rather than all we could say, which made him believe so naively in the siege of Berlin.

“ From that day our military operations became much simpler. Taking Berlin was merely a matter of patience. Every now and then, when the old man was tired of waiting, a letter from his son was read to him—an imaginary letter, of course, as nothing could enter Paris, and as, since Sedan, MacMahon’s aid-de-camp had been sent to a German fortress. Can you not imagine the despair of the poor girl, without tidings of her father, knowing him to be a prisoner, deprived of all comforts, perhaps ill, and yet obliged to make him speak in cheerful letters, somewhat short, as from a soldier in the field, always advancing in a conquered country. Sometimes, when the invalid was weaker than usual, weeks passed without fresh news. But was he anxious and unable to sleep, suddenly a letter arrived from Germany which she read gayly at his bedside, struggling hard with her tears. The Colonel listened religiously, smiling with an air of superiority, approving, criticizing, explaining; but it was in his answers to his son that he was at his best. ‘Never forget that you are a Frenchman,’ he wrote, ‘be generous to those poor people. Do not make the invasion too hard for them.’ His advice was never-ending, edifying sermons about respect of property, the politeness due to ladies, in short, quite a code of military honor for the use of conquerors. With all this he put in some general reflections on politics and the conditions of the peace to be imposed on the vanquished. With regard to the latter, I must say he was not exacting.

“ ‘The war indemnity and nothing else. It is no good to take provinces. Can one turn Germany into France?’

“ He dictated this with so firm a voice, and one felt so much sincerity in his words, so much patriotic faith, that it was impossible to listen to him unmoved.

“ Meanwhile the siege went on—not the siege of Berlin, alas! We were at the worst period of cold, of bombardment, of



epidemic, of famine. But, thanks to our care, and the indefatigable tenderness which surrounded him, the old man's serenity was never for a moment disturbed. Up to the end I was able to procure white bread and fresh meat for him, but for him only. You could not imagine anything more touching than those breakfasts of the grandfather, so innocently egotistic, sitting up in bed, fresh and smiling, the napkin tied under his chin; at his side his granddaughter, pale from her privations, guiding his hands, making him drink, helping him to eat all these good, forbidden things. Then, revived by the repast, in the comfort of his warm room, with the wintry wind shut out and the snow eddying about in the wind, the old Cuirassier would recall his Northern campaigns and would relate to us that disastrous defeat in Russia where there was nothing to eat but frozen biscuit and horseflesh.

"Can you understand that, little one? We ate horseflesh."

"I should think she did understand it. For two months she had tasted nothing else. As convalescence approached, our task increased daily in difficulty. The numbness of the Colonel's senses, as well as of his limbs, which had hitherto helped us so much, was beginning to pass away. Once or twice already, those terrible volleys at the Porte Maillot had made him start and prick up his ears like a war-horse; we were obliged to invent a recent victory of Bazaine's before Berlin and salvos fired from the Invalides in honor of it. Another day (the Thursday of Buzenval I think it was) his bed had been pushed to the window, whence he saw some of the National Guard massed upon the Avenue de la Grande Armée.

"What soldiers are those?" he asked, and we heard him grumbling between his teeth:

"Badly drilled, badly drilled."

"Nothing came of this, but we understood that henceforth greater precautions were necessary. Unfortunately we were not careful enough.

"One evening I was met by the child, in much trouble.

"It is to-morrow they make their entry," she said.

"Could the grandfather's door have been open? In thinking of it since, I remember that all that evening his face wore an extraordinary expression. Probably he had overheard us; only we spoke of the Prussians and he thought of the French, of the triumphal entry he had so long expected, MacMahon descending the Avenue amidst flowers and flourish of trumpets, his own

son riding beside the marshal, and he himself on his balcony, in full uniform as at Lutzen, saluting the ragged colors and the eagles blackened by powder.

“Poor Colonel Jouve! He no doubt imagined that we wished to prevent his assisting at the defile of our troops, lest the emotion should prove too much for him, and therefore took care to say nothing to us; but the next day, just at the time the Prussian battalions cautiously entered the long road leading from the Porte Maillot to the Tuileries, the window up there was softly opened and the Colonel appeared on the balcony with his helmet, his sword, all his long-unused but glorious apparel of Milhaud's Cuirassiers.

“I often ask myself what supreme effort of will, what sudden impulse of fading vitality had placed him thus erect in harness.

“All we know is that he was there, standing at the railing, wondering to find the wide avenues so silent, the shutters all closed, Paris like a great lazaret, flags everywhere, but such strange ones, white with red crosses, and no one to meet our soldiers.

“For a moment he may have thought himself mistaken. .

“But no! There, behind the Arc de Triomphe, there was a confused sound, a black line advancing in the growing daylight—then, little by little, the spikes of the helmets glisten, the little drums of Jena begin to beat, and under the Arc de l'Étoile, accompanied by the heavy tramp of the troops, by the clatter of sabres, burst forth Schubert's Triumphant March.

“In the dead silence of the streets was heard a cry, a terrible cry,

“‘To arms!—to arms!—the Prussians.’ And the four Uhlans of the advance guard might have seen up there, on the balcony, a tall old man stagger, wave his arms, and fall. This time Colonel Jouve was dead.”



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## CATCH QUESTIONS.

If a goose weighs ten pounds and a half its own weight, what is the weight of the goose? Who has not been tempted to reply on the instant, fifteen pounds?—the correct answer being, of course, twenty pounds. Indeed, it is astonishing what a very simple query will sometimes catch a wise man napping. Even the following have been known to succeed.

How many days would it take to cut up a piece of cloth fifty yards long, one yard being cut off every day?

A snail climbing up a post twenty feet high ascends five feet every day and slips down four feet every night. How long will the snail take to reach the top of the post?

A wise man having a window one yard high and one yard wide, requiring more light, enlarged his window to twice its former size, yet the window was still only one yard high and one yard wide. How was this done?

This a catch question in geometry, as the preceding were catch questions in arithmetic. The window was diamond-shaped at first, and was afterwards made square.

As to the two former, perhaps it is scarcely necessary seriously to point out that the answer to the first is not fifty days, but forty-nine; and to the second, not twenty days, but sixteen—since the snail who gains one foot each day for fifteen days, climbs on the sixteenth day to the top of the pole and there remains.

A man walks around a pole, on the top of which is a monkey. As the man moves, the monkey turns on the top of the pole so as still to keep face to face with the man. Query:—When the man has gone around the pole, has he, or has he not, gone around the monkey?

The answer which will occur at first sight to most persons is that the man has not gone around the monkey since he has never been behind it. The correct answer, however, as decided by Knowledge in the pages of which this momentous question has been argued, is that the man has gone around the monkey in going around the pole.

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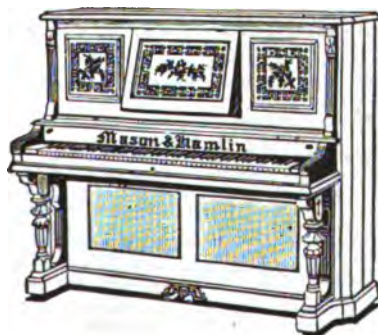
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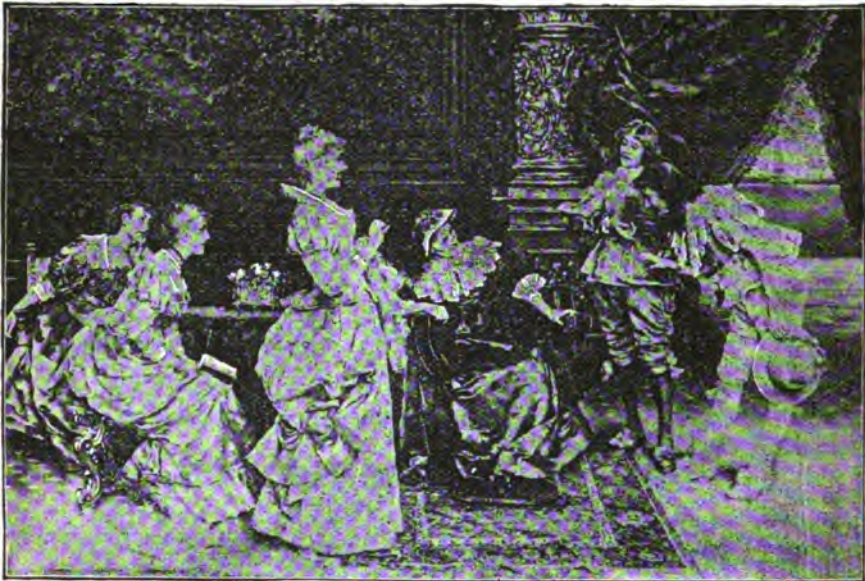


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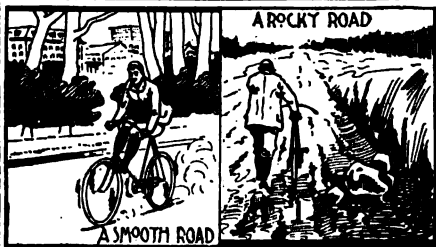
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